

# THE LAUREATE FRATERNITY

AN INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE

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*and*  
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## PREFACE

The purpose of *The Laureate Fraternity: An Introduction to Literature* is to promote sensitive, intelligent, and mature responses by the reader to works of literature. The book aims to accomplish this end by providing texts of literary worth and significance arranged in a clear and stimulating order, together with such aids to good reading as may, in the editors' belief, heighten the reader's awareness of, and pleasure in, the texts. The works constitute, of course, the primary materials of the book; the apparatus is intended only to facilitate the reader's understanding, enjoyment, and judgment of the texts themselves. The book should above all enable the reader to experience literature by himself and for himself.

With a few exceptions, the texts have been chosen, first, for their intrinsic literary value and, second, because they represent the major types, forms, movements, and periods of literature. The exceptions are those poems of dubious quality, in the 'Feet of Clay' poetry section, which are intended to provoke questions of taste and judgment. We have found that it is extremely helpful to have at hand, in a very limited number, certain texts which appear to be what they are not, in order to have occasion to warn the reader and the student against the superficial and the cheap.

The four major types of literature which the book considers are fiction (divided into the short story and the novel), drama, poetry, and the essay. Each of these types is given a section to itself, with the exception of the essay, which is not treated as a separate type but is introduced functionally into the several sections for the purpose of throwing critical light upon one or more of the particular selections. No attempt is made to include every author and literary movement of importance; rather, we have tried to illustrate certain properties of literature discussed more fully in the Introduction, properties which we have arranged in four groups of qualities: range, variety, and scope, intensity, sensitivity, and depth, form, unity, and order, and representativeness, vicariousness, and enlargement.

The order of arrangement within the sections varies somewhat from one to the other. In the short story, the emphasis is placed upon range of subject matter and variety of treatment. For the most part, the stories are drawn from modern authors—James, Thurber, Sartre, Alpert, Maugham, and Williams—and among the kinds of story represented are the tale, the psychological thriller, the social problem story, and the detective story, each in

turn illustrating a different style of treatment ranging from realism through impressionism to symbolism

The novel is represented by Melville's *Billy Budd*, Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, and Loomis' *The Charcoal Horse*, the first being primarily concerned with character and the moral dilemma of the choice between justice and love of humanity, the second with symbol and the plight of the individual overwhelmed by his own institutions, and the third with the semi-existential nature of values in our society. Additionally, we include analyses of seven novels easily available in paper book form.

The drama is divided into its two major forms, tragedy and comedy, and under each the outstanding periods of achievement are illustrated: classical tragedy by Sophocles, Renaissance tragedy by Shakespeare, and modern tragedy by Kingsley. Three different styles of comedy are exemplified by the plays of Goldsmith, Wilde, and O'Neill, the choice having been limited to authors writing in English in order to avoid the loss of comic nuance which translations entail.

In order to convey some realization of the scope of literature, we have found it suitable to use some translations for the essay, fiction, and tragedy, but for poetry, as for dramatic comedy, we have drawn examples only from English and American literature in order to ensure the retention of the full flavor of poetic expression. The poems are grouped around a number of traditional and provocative themes in order to enable the reader to see how different poets, from Chaucer to Auden, using different techniques and having differing points of view, have treated similar themes. The major poets in English have, of course, been drawn upon as well as some less well-known names. While it was impossible to exclude a certain number of familiar poems both because they are the best poems in themselves and for our own special purposes, it will be seen and, we hope, appreciated, that a not inconsiderable number of poems are freshly chosen and are therefore unspoiled by excessive appearance in anthologies.

Despite the danger that ancillary materials may be substituted for the actual reading of the literary texts themselves, it is neither necessary nor desirable for the reader to come to his reading altogether unassisted by suggestions which may smooth his way and increase his understanding and enjoyment of the primary texts. Indeed, the appreciation by the reader of the force of tradition, his ability to recognize what the author is trying to do, his knowledge of what to look for in literature, his understanding of the meanings of words, allusions, and symbols, and his application of the standards of judgment proper to a particular work—all these are indispensable components of the experience of literature and cannot be separated from it. Literature is not created in a vacuum, nor is it to be read in one. The more the reader can bring to bear upon a work of literature, the richer will be his experience of it.

It is from this point of view that we provide the reader with four kinds of aids. First, the introductory section is devoted to a consideration of the fundamental problems raised by the nature and function of literature. Joyce

Cary gives us an insight into the impulses which animate artistic creation, Plato deals with the vexing relationships of literature to society, T S Eliot attempts to define the quality of greatness in literature, Karl Shapiro tracks down the writer in the workshop—and the editors have contributed a survey of the various problems involved, together with some tentative solutions designed more to stimulate discussion than to provide final answers. Second, each section contains a detailed analysis of the technique and structure of an example of the type under discussion: thus there are analyses of the detective story by Dorothy Sayers, of the novel by Henry James, of tragedy by Stanley Hyman, of comedy by Wylie Sypher, and of poetry by Matthew Arnold and Stephen Spender. The editors have added their own analyses of the short story, fiction, drama, tragedy, comedy, poetry, and the fifteen themes around which the poetry selections have been grouped. Third, interspersed in the various sections are critical essays which show the various techniques of criticism at work: there are James Thurber on Henry James, Francis Fergusson on Sophocles, G Wilson Knight on Shakespeare, Kenneth Burke on Keats, Wordsworth on his own poetry, Lionel Trilling on Wordsworth, Theodore Morrison on Arnold, Edgar Allan Poe on himself and his work, and the whole problem of the critique of poetry—Wordsworth on the nature of Romantic poetry, Samuel Johnson on Milton, William Empson on Marvell, and Allen Tate on Emily Dickinson. Lastly, each primary text selection is preceded by a brief introduction which gives essential information and is followed by questions for study designed to bring out the structure and content of the texts.

We have arranged the sections in what we think to be the natural order from the familiar to the difficult, that is, from the short story to poetry, on the ground that of all the literary types the short story is perhaps the most frequently read and the most likely to engage the reader's interest at the outset and to lead him on to other sections. However, the study of the texts can begin at any point, since the introductory materials and the questions for study move back and forth among the texts without regard to their printed order. It is, of course, impossible to start from scratch or to postulate the zero reader. To read a work of literature well it is necessary to have read other works of literature too. But *that* is simultaneously the difficulty, the challenge, the profit, and the pleasure of literature.

ADRIAN H. JAFFE

HERBERT WEISINGER

*East Lansing, Michigan*  
*April, 1960*





THE  
EXPERIENCE  
OF  
LITERATURE





## INTRODUCTION

# *The Problems of Literature*

POLONIUS What do you read my lord?

HAMLET Words words words

Hamlet had, as usual, an explanation for every thing: not for nothing had he been up to the university. For when we read, we do read words. Writing is made up of words, words deliberately arranged in a certain order to produce a certain effect. Whether what we read is an advertisement, an article in a book of reference, or a play by Shakespeare, we are reading an arrangement of words. Words are by no means our only method of communication. We can communicate by an arrangement of sounds in time in the form of music, or by an arrangement of colors and lines in space in the form of painting, or by an arrangement of arbitrary and non-evocative symbols in the form of mathematics. But of these various forms of communication, it is our conviction that arrangements of words knowingly employed are more capable of expressing and conveying the range, quality, and intensity of man's experience than the other means at our disposal, since words can encompass the totality of experience, both from within and without the individual, as well as his reflections on, and reactions to, it.

It has sometimes been argued that only mathematical symbols can express ideas with objectivity and precision, and that the trouble with words is that they carry overtones of feeling and meaning which militate against rigorous thinking. While no one will deny that words do convey more than they mean in this very supposed defect lies their strength. A scientific statement can report one—and that not necessarily the most significant—response of a man to his experience, but words well arranged can express and communicate more of the levels of response to experience, and they thereby enable the reader to participate in that experience himself. Through words we can share in the experience of others. Words are therefore humanizing; they are the bridges that stretch from man to man and enable men to cross the seas of their loneliness. By means of this process of participation, words increase one's stature as a human being.

If the arrangement of words is the factor com-

mon to all writing, it is also the factor which at the same time allows us to distinguish one kind of writing from another. To be sure, writing is a manipulation of words, but words may be manipulated in different ways and for different purposes, and it is the differences in aims, methods, and results which distinguish one kind of writing from another. Such distinctions are, of course, arbitrary, since in actual practice no formal and rigid separations are made, but they serve to point up the nature of the differences in the various ways in which words can be manipulated. For example, the writer of an advertisement arranges his words for the purpose of persuading you to act; that is, to go out and purchase the product he is urging you to buy. In such a case, words are not ends in themselves, but a means to an end, that of overt action. Again, the writer of a book of reference arranges his words for the purpose of conveying information to you; once more, words are not ends in themselves, but a means to an end, that of the propagation of knowledge. Now, we may admire an advertisement for the cleverness of its arrangement of words, but our real admiration can be expressed only if the advertisement manages to move us out of our chairs and into the store; we may admire an encyclopedia article for its masterly way of presenting us with difficult and complex information lucidly and economically, but our real admiration must once again be reserved for the information *per se* and only secondarily for the manner of its expression.

But there are some writers who use words in such ways and for such purposes that neither overt action nor information is an adequate term to express the nature of their effects on us. For these writers, words are not a means to an end, but ends in themselves, and they manipulate words in patterns of sounds and sense (and sometimes nonsense) which serve no immediate purpose beyond that which is already inherent in the arrangements of sounds and sense in themselves. This does not mean, however, that there are no other purposes involved in such arrangements of words; no doubt Shakespeare wrote his plays to make a living, Pope wrote his satires to irritate his enemies, and Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* to justify the ways of God to man. Yet these are ends incidental to, perhaps in a certain sense almost accidental to, such arrangements of words—for words are used here to express and convey experience, or aspects of experience, emotions felt so intensely, ideas thought so deeply, visions seen so sharply, as to be given communicable form in words which move us as readers into re-experiencing the intensity of the emotion, the depth of thought, the sharpness of the vision, and thereby add a dimension of experience to ourselves.

Our response is therefore not overt, and if we change at all, we change inside ourselves. We

have increased our awareness of ourselves and of others. Sound sense and form have been combined to enable us to participate in the experience communicated by another. Such an arrangement of words we may call literature. We must, however, sound a note of caution: we do not mean by the writer's experience any actual experience of his own, but only the experience expressed by his writing. Literature is concerned with objectified experience, and for our purposes we need not worry whether a writer actually had the experience he communicates; our only concern as readers is that the work of literature we are reading express an experience in such a way that we can re-experience it in ourselves. If we keep this principle firmly in mind, we shall be able to avoid those problems connected with the writer's personality, his deeds, his sincerity, and so forth, which confuse rather than clarify the understanding of literature.

Let us see if we cannot make these distinctions clearer by four illustrations. The first is an advertisement for a dress taken from a New York newspaper: a pretty girl (naturally) cocktail glass in hand, sits facing a handsome young man, and the ad reads:

Gilt threaded jersey for one of the most romantic dresses of the new socially-minded season. A portrait neckline frames your face, a full skirt gathers grace as you walk, a black velvet belt hugs your tiny waist. Non-tarnishable metallic shot wool and rayon jersey in natural pink aqua lime. Sizes 10-16.

Our second example comes from an authoritative study by the staff of the Victoria and Albert Museum of the history of dress of the seventeenth century:

At the beginning of the century women wore a long pointed bodice with a cone-shaped Spanish or barrel-shaped French farthingale skirt. This outer garment was a sleeveless robe. The rising waistline may be traced from the bodice through the negligee or waistcoat of 1620 to the front-lacing bodice of the Vandyck period. By the Restoration the bodice had a long break in front again; it laced high in the back and was lower over the shoulders. Skirts continued to be long and full.

Next here is a passage from Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*:

All visible things are emblems; that thou seest is not there on its own account; strictly taken, is not there at all; matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some Idea, and *body* it forth. Hence Clothes, as despicable as we think them, are so unspeakably significant. Clothes from the King's mantle downwards are emblematic, not of want only, but of a manifold Cunning Victory over Want. On the other hand, all Emblematic things are properly Clothes: thought woven, or hand woven, must not the imagination weave. Garments, visible Bodies

wherein the else invisible creations and inspirations of our Reason are like Spirits revealed, and first become all powerful, the rather if, as we often see, the Hand aid her, and (by wool clothes or otherwise) reveal such even to the outward eye?

Finally, here is a poem by the seventeenth-century English poet Robert Herrick, called 'Upon Julia's Clothes':

When as in silks my Julia goes,  
Then then (methinks) how sweetly flows  
That liquefaction of her clothes.

Next when I cast mine eyes and see  
That brave vibration each way free,  
O how that glittering taketh me.

Let us examine these four pieces of writing. To start with, we notice that they all deal with the same subject: clothes. But they deal with this same subject in different ways and for different ends. The first has been shrewdly designed to flatter the reader into purchasing the dress described (and illustrated) by a process of identification—the dress is a mark of sophistication; when you wear the dress you become sophisticated too. But if the reader appreciates the prose of the advertisement alone, then it is an unsuccessful piece of writing; it has failed in its purpose. The second excerpt succinctly describes the fashions in women's clothes in the seventeenth century; it is brief, clear, and informative; the reader is neither moved to act nor to react; he has his information compactly in hand, and that is that. But with the third selection difficulties begin to appear. The passage does deal with clothes, but obviously not from the point of view of getting you to buy them or even of merely describing them. Carlyle is using clothes in a symbolic sense; he is employing an extended metaphor based on clothes to tell us how he conceives of the nature of reality. His intent is therefore serious and philosophic. He wishes to convince us of the rightness of his position by all the means at his command, and he appeals to us simultaneously on several levels: ideological, emotional, and literary. He is both informative and persuasive together, but if we are not necessarily convinced, we can at least appreciate the cleverness of the conception of the metaphor and the ingenuity of the way in which it has been worked out; indeed, it is more likely that we shall enjoy the distinctive style rather than be persuaded of the idea which has been carried by it.

Now, the fourth piece, the poem by Herrick, also deals with clothes, and in fact it deals with precisely the same kind of clothes which have been described for us in the second selection. Herrick lived in the seventeenth century in England and saw with an appreciative eye the very same clothes on the women



around him. But he is certainly not interested in clothes for their own sake: on the contrary his concern is with communicating to us his experience of delight in seeing Julia. Her clothes are used only to enhance her loveliness; he is really saying nothing about Julia's clothes but volumes about Julia and volumes more about Herrick and Julia. Skirts, our authority tells us, continued to be long and full.

A full skirt gathers grace as you walk, the advertisement purrs at you. How sweetly flows Herrick sings. That liquefaction of her clothes. The bare idea in each is the same but it is only from Herrick that we can re-experience the sensation of seeing a lovely woman molding and being molded by her flowing dress. The very sounds of the poem rustle like the silks themselves and Herrick's unerring choice of the right and unique words—liquefaction, vibration, glittering—shocks us as it were into re-experiencing in ourselves his experience of seeing Julia in her silks. O how that glittering taketh me.

We perceive then that literature is not so much a thing in itself as a relationship between writer, writing, and reader. It comes to life only when the reader, stirred by the arrangement of words which he reads (or hears), re-creates in himself the experience recorded by the writing. As we have already said, this communicated experience is an objective thing; whether the writer did or did not have such an experience is immaterial to us as readers; our interest lies in the work of literature itself as a means of re-creating experience. With this warning in mind, let us examine for a moment or two the relationship between the writer, writing, and reader. Art is, by its very nature, selective. Out of the welter of experience which impinges on him from all sides, the writer can react only to a limited number of impressions made on him; he cannot possibly respond to all experience, nor can he deal with all experience, even if he were to do so, he would merely reproduce the chaos of experience around him. He therefore must choose some aspects of experience with which to be concerned, and he chooses those aspects which seem to him most richly permeated with significance. These he arranges in a pattern; that is to say, he makes a deliberate, objective and purposeful construction out of experience in terms of an arrangement of words. Now this arrangement of words, having been derived in the first instance from experience, becomes in its turn a new experience, and since in this form it is a fresh, novel and unique organization of experience, it throws fresh, novel and unique light on the experience from which it has been derived. In this sense, art is both a crystallization and a criticism of nature and of man.

How does the writer work? Unfortunately we have but little accurate information on the genesis

and development of a piece of literature from the writer's mind to the printed page, though the two essays by Karl Shapiro and Stephen Spender reprinted here are helpful and illuminating. It would appear that there is no way of telling in advance what stimulus will serve as the writer's point of departure, nor will the appeal to inspiration advance very much our understanding of the making of a work of literature. What could be less inspiring we may well ask than the subject matter of Pope's *Essay on Criticism* and more inspiring than Elizabeth Brownings subject for her poem "A Child Asleep"? Yet the first poem sparkles with wit and superb craftsmanship while the other sinks in a slough of metricious sentimentality. Again it is hard to avoid the conviction that one of the compelling reasons for Shakespeares having written his sonnets is that almost every Elizabethan poet worth his salt was expected to compose sonnets and we can find parallels for many of his themes and images in the sonnet sequences of his Italian and French predecessors and English contemporaries. When all the rules which Pope lays down have been observed and all the devices of versification he suggests have been practiced, there is certainly very little room left for inspiration. You will see too from Wordsworth's *Preface* that some of the leading romantics did not depend on inspiration alone but wrote under the direction of a very carefully worked out theory of composition. We must come to the conclusion, then, that as Aldous Huxley has suggested, anything may become the stuff of literature provided that it has been intensely apprehended and forcefully communicated.

The work of literature does not spring full blown from the mind of the writer but is the final result of a long, laborious and often painful task of construction. It may very well be true that Shakespeare did not, as Jonson tells us, blot a single line, but this does not mean that the actual writing was not preceded by a long period of gestation and change. Coleridge reports that *Kubla Khan* was composed in its entirety in a dream but we have been able to reconstruct something of what went on in his mind before and during this dream by a study of his reading in the travel books which provided much of the scenery and imagery of the poem. If you read Kingsley's *Detective Story* with a copy of Aristotle's *Poetics* beside you, you will get a clear picture of the structure of the play as Kingsley built it up. And note too, the essay by Henry James on the art of fiction, which shows how the highly conscious and conscientious literary craftsman works. Literary convention plays a much more important role than is usually accorded it. The shape of the form which the poet has inherited from his predecessors gives organization and backbone to the new creation from

the very start. Once the writer undertakes to compose a sonnet or a tragedy or an epic, he reconciles himself to the loss of a certain amount of freedom by the gain he secures in the protection of the form which provides him with its own dynamic already secured.

Paradoxically enough the restrictions of form are liberating for since the writer need no longer worry about the organization of his materials he can devote himself fully to their development. Note for example how much Pope has won from tradition by his employment of the conventional pastoral form in his *Spring*. The First Pastoral. One might almost say that the poem is nine tenths tradition and one tenth Pope but our pleasure in the poem lies in our recognition of the tradition and in our savoring of Pope's skill in manipulating it. Here Pope has had no wish to employ the form for any other purpose than that of tying his hand at one more variation on an old theme but see how much freedom the use of an old form has given Milton in his

*Lycidas* in which the conventional elegy form has provided his moral indignation an outlet and a structure. There is every advantage to be gained by the writer from drawing upon the reservoir of meaning and association which have accumulated around certain symbols and themes immediately we see the very titles of Arnold's *Philomela* or Yeats's *Leda* and the *Swan* echoes of richly encrusted association are awakened in us and we respond not only to this particular poem but to all other poems on the same theme which we know the richer our associations, the richer our response. Indeed it would appear that the quest for absolute originality is futile and self-defeating and what we ought to be constantly on the lookout for is not so much originality of invention as depth and penetration of insight. What after all can be said of the plots of *Oedipus Rex* or of *Othello* except that they serve their purposes in keeping the plays going but how much has been said—and how much more can be said—of the characters of *Oedipus* and *Othello*.

Once a piece of writing has been written and published it stands by itself as an objective phenomenon. It is not a document illustrative of the writer's biography nor of an event in history nor is it an excuse for the reader to go off under its influence, into pleasant reveries with which it has but the most tenuous of connections. Rather a work of literature should be regarded as a very delicate yet very exact instrument by which the writer recreates in the reader an experience. It is designed to set up precise reactions and though more may sometimes be found in it than the writer intended or was aware that he had included, only the text itself is the final authority for what is contained in it. Now given the bulk of the writings which are reprinted here as ex-

amples of the scope of literature what generalizations about the characteristics of literature as an objective phenomenon can we make? We would suggest that literature possesses these groupings of qualities range variety, and scope intensity sensitivity and depth, form unity and order representativeness vicariousness and enlargement and finally the values appropriate to each of these groups of qualities.

As to the first of these groupings of qualities we would suggest that literature possesses range variety and scope because of its ability to traverse the entire area of human experience both from within and from without and both in depth and in extension. It is capable of penetrating into the very depths of the human soul we can look into the heart of an Iago we can feel the heat of passion of a Byron we can stand on the heights of *Paradise Regained*. There is no time or place which literature cannot evoke we can experience the sordid reality of a New York police station in *Detective Story* we can feel the terror of the lone individual oppressed by a world he does not understand in *The Metamorphosis*. In short there is no experience which literature cannot communicate and its forms of expression are as rich and varied as the experiences it creates. We have represented here only the major forms and some of their more frequent variations but we have far from exhausted all the forms which are available to us just as we have not even begun to run short of the subjects with which literature has been concerned. Coupled with this range and variety both of form and of subject matter is a corresponding wealth of difference in treatment and point of view. Of course *Oedipus Rex*, *Othello* and *Detective Story* are all tragedies yet they differ greatly in the attitudes they take toward man's fate which is their common subject matter and in the ways those attitudes are expressed. The first is calm and serene its language unornamented and strong its acceptance of what the gods give based on the conviction that the way of the gods is just the second is passionate and anguished its language rich and profuse its final pity achieved only after passion has burned out a noble man the last is realistic and derivative its language crude and strident its end partly mechanical and partly hopeful. Yet even within the limits of a single form what richness and variety in treatment and point of view we have been given.

As a consequence of its qualities of range variety and scope literature provides an unmatched enrichment of the totality of experience at the same time, this enrichment is not general and diffuse but on the contrary, is in every case precise and intense. For one of the great merits of literature is that whatever the experience which is conveyed to us, it is an experience heightened sharpened and exactly

focused. It is in other words the very essence of that experience, whether it be superficial or profound, delicately evanescent or grandly massive, simply evocative or richly associative: it is that experience, no matter of what dimension, size, or significance, caught at the height of its flight. Compare for example the poems in the group of the poetry section on the theme of the sorrows of love. Here are several poems on the same theme, yet each different in treatment and attitude, the depths of revulsion in *The Expense of Spirit*, the cynicism of

*'Tis Now Since I*, the ironies of Dryden's *Songs*, the utter despair of *When We Two Parted*, the bitter protest of *O That Twere Possible*, and the wild anguish of *Leda* and *the Swan*. But despite these many differences in tone, each poem conveys to us the very distillation of the experience involved. From this point of view, there are no differences between them as communications of experience. For this reason, it is a critical error, though one which is frequently made, to attempt to contrast, say, a Herrick lyric with Milton's *Paradise Lost* to the disadvantage of the former. What we must realize is that each, within its own terms, communicates experience with precision and intensity; what differences there are between them are the result of the difference in range, not in intensity, of experience. However, it seems fair to say that where we have both range and intensity, our awareness of experience will be deeper and richer than where we have either one or the other alone.

The third group of qualities consists of form, unity, and order. You will remember that we asserted that art is selective in that the artist arranges into a meaningful and communicable shape those aspects of experience which seem to him most richly permeated with significance. Now the necessity for, and the very act of, selection in itself together impose on him from the outset the use of some means of judgment by which he can reject and select, as well as some principle of arrangement by which he can construct his reshaping of experience. But each writer gives order and coherence to experience in his own way, and he may accept the prevailing conceptions of his age as eminently satisfactory for his purposes, as did Dante, or he may fabricate a fanciful system of his own, as did Yeats, or he may choose to compromise between the old and the new, as did Shakespeare. What is essential is that he must be able to respond with all the passion at his command to the principle of selection to which he has committed himself, so that he can transmute belief and passion together into the terms demanded by his medium. From this it follows that there is no guarantee that the writer's acceptance of a principle of selection and organization—which may very well possess all the standard virtues of a correct

moral position—will necessarily and automatically insure the creation of a work of art. The seventeenth century is littered with the wrecks of epic poems on the Christian theme which were theologically more properly orthodox than *Paradise Lost* but which commit the worst artistic sin of all, that of being dull, for they lack the fire which transformed Milton's particular theological dogmas into that greater concern over man's fate which inspires and informs his epic poem.

The writer then must utilize whatever machinery of selection and organization suits his purpose, but he must use it in such a way that it is capable of being universalized, of being apprehended and understood by men of other times, other places, and other beliefs. Chaucer's *Wife of Bath* is dressed in the height of fourteenth-century English fashion, but she is still husbandizing in the London of the New York of today. We laugh when we learn that cannon were used in the war of the angels in *Paradise Lost*, but we quickly forget the lapse when we are confronted by Milton's sense of the awful consequences over the struggle for the possession of Adam's soul, which is the real organizing principle behind the poem. It is to this sense of urgency to this suspense as we await the outcome of Adam's momentous decision that we respond, for, though the terms which Milton employs are certainly not the terms which we should now use ourselves, we can see through and behind them to the greater issue—the issue being no less than man's fate itself, which is still as real as significant and ever as in doubt as when Milton wrote. Or, to take another instance, it is quite possible to analyze Hamlet's character in terms of the prevailing Elizabethan theory of psychology, that of the humors, just as it is useful today to examine O'Neill's characters in the light of the Freudian psychology. But even if we assume that Shakespeare did make use of the psychology of humors, this is far very far from accounting for Hamlet's character and for its fascination for us. The *humor* psychology was merely Shakespeare's means of blocking in the outlines of Hamlet's character in terms which his audience would most readily and quickly grasp, but if he had done only this *Hamlet* would have sunk into the limbo of other forgotten Elizabethan plays. To be sure, *Hamlet* is a product of Elizabethan times and circumstances, but Shakespeare has poured into him a meaning and an appeal which transcend his particular time and place, the concrete, specific and unique character *Hamlet* has become the symbol of a universal type of man, the man of principle who knows he must act and who knows that his own act will corrupt the very principle he seeks to uphold. This is the individual Hamlet's dilemma, it is our dilemma as well.

In short, the writer must transmute his contemporary and transitory machinery into a permanent and universal symbol capable of awakening in his readers of whatever time and place a permanent and universal response. We can describe the mode of operation of symbols only in paradoxical terms. It must be individual yet typical; it must be unique yet universal, being unmistakably the thing itself, it must be just as unmistakably the thing for which it stands. Whatever their origins there appear to be certain symbols which have the power of immediately quickening our interest and of deepening our understanding, for they seem to us as wells of significance in whose bottomless waters we discern endless depths of meaning. Nor does there appear to be any area of experience from which symbols cannot be derived. From the observation of nature have come the symbols of the tree of life, the sad cry of the nightingale, the lily of the field, the dove, the lamb, the deer, the wasteland, the cherry orchard, and the tiger burning bright. Again, the symbol may be an individual who sums up in himself in concentrated form all that our experience of human character has taught us: Ulysses the shrewd man, Achilles the man of wrath, Aeneas the dutiful man, Tristram the man of passion, Troilus the gull, Robinson Crusoe the self-sufficient man, and K the man in the middle. Or experiences drawn from the passage of life itself may be of symbolic significance: an example is the symbol of the hero's journey combined with his quest. In its most generalized form the hero goes forth, encounters obstacles and adversaries, engages in mortal combat, is defeated, dies, is reborn, triumphantly, marries; at the height of his power seems to fade away into obscurity and appears in the end in some form of apotheosis. In this connection we remember the wanderings of Ulysses, Jason's quest of the golden fleece, the search for the Holy Grail, Dante's descent into the underworld, the adventures of Don Quixote, Pilgrim's progress, the search of the Ancient Mariner, Ahab's chase after Moby Dick, Hans Castorp's sojourn on and descent from the magic mountain and—to complete the circle—the memorable day in the life of that other and later yet the same Ulysses. In other words, any object or any attribute may be invested with symbolic meaning: we know St. Sebastian by his arrows, justice by her scales, matrimony by its gold band, we know light by Apollo and Apollo by light, we know it is winter when Adonis is slain and we know it is spring when he is brought to life again, we know Eve by woman and woman by Eve, we know by signs and symbols. From this we learn that art abhors the abstract, the general and the typical yet by passionately concerning itself with the concrete, the unique, and the individual it gives our unlocalized feelings and generalized ideas viability, vivacity, and vision.

Art, then, takes up experience and boldly wrenches it into new shapes and as we have said it does not so much hold the mirror up to nature as it confronts nature with a new, fresh and unique version of itself. And in the space which lies between experience as it is and experience as it has been remade by art arises the vision of experience as it ought to be. From this process of reshaping and re-forming experience is derived that enlargement of experience which is the hallmark of art—an enlargement which is not one dimensional but operates on all the levels of our being, for it is not merely aesthetic or intellectual, or emotional, or moral alone, but all these together and more besides. Further, because it clarifies and crystallizes experience, art cuts across those differences of temperament, time, place and point of view which separate man from man, and this is especially true of literature, which is less burdened by the difficulties of technique as a medium of expression and communication than are the other arts. Despite the gulfs of time and custom which separate us from the Greeks of twenty-five hundred years ago, we can still feel in ourselves the agonies of Oedipus from across the late Middle Ages; we still hear the sound of the horns warning and start up with Little Musgrave; the passage of a hundred and fifty years has not yet filled the aching void left by the death of Lucy.

Moreover, by virtue of the representative power of literature we can participate in experiences which, were they to happen to us in the course of our everyday lives, would be too shattering to bear or understand. Surely few of us would want—nor would we have the stamina—to pass through Othello's vicissitudes yet through the medium of tragedy we can vicariously take part in his greatness, his suffering, his fall, and his rebirth. We have thus added dimensions of experience to ourselves safely, yet with the intensity needed to effect our growth in stature. It is far from certain that experience by itself is the best teacher and life by itself can be cruel and pointless, quite devoid of humanity, meaning and nobility. But once experiences have been put through the ordering and purging pressures of art, they yield up the qualities we need and seek. By vicarious participation we can speak and act freely and greatly; we can safely release our pent-up feelings, we can cleanse ourselves of dross and of evil. We experience largeness of heart and mind; we are exhilarated by a sense of purpose; we see what man can be.

Finally, let us turn to the reader. What are his responsibilities in the making of literature? First of all, we have to realize that reading is an action. The writer can only provide a set of stimuli in the form of arrangements of words, but it is the reader alone who can re-form them into the experience which

they convey. The reader must therefore bring to the writing sympathy, sensitivity, learning, and imagination. Perhaps it is surprising that we have included learning as one of the reader's requisites. But unless the reader makes every effort to know the meanings of the words employed, as well as their particular meanings in their special contexts, unless he is able to recognize all the allusions, references, and quotations both explicit and implied, unless he is aware of the technical difficulties involved in the form employed and can appreciate the technical virtuosity displayed, unless, in short, he possesses, or is willing to go to the trouble to acquire the learning which the writer expects him to have, he cannot understand what is really going on in the writing and he cannot therefore re-experience with any exactness or richness the experience which the author wishes him to have.

We think too that no single approach to a work of literature can by itself exhaust all the meanings contained in it. The moral of Professor Morrison's essay *Dover Beach Revisited* must always be kept in mind. Each of the approaches to the poem which he so amusingly illustrates reveals one facet of the poem which the others are not equipped to bring out and only a sensible combination of all of them together can begin to do full justice to the poem in its entirety. And if this is true of a single lyric, how much more imperative it is that a broadness of approach be maintained when we are concerned with a work of literature of the magnitude and significance of *Othello*. We therefore take the view that any information which is relevant to the text should be brought to bear on it in order to achieve its elucidation, enjoyment, and judgment. For example, the reading of *The Metamorphosis* certainly gains in depth of meaning and appreciation if we apply to it a multiple approach. The story may be read as a tale pure and simple; it may be read as an allegory of the trials and tribulations of Everyman; it may be read as the symbol of the ordinary man crushed by forces which are more powerful than he is and which he cannot possibly understand or come to terms with; it may be read as the symbol of the weak individual dominated by the all-conquering state; it may be read as an allegory of the relations between father and son; or it may be read

as an allegory of the relations between man and God. Each of these layers of meaning, and there are more besides, is contained one within the other and to neglect one at the expense of another is thereby to diminish by just that much our full experience of the story as a whole.

The second responsibility of the reader is that of judgment and evaluation. The more we bring to bear on a work of literature, the more we will get out of it, and the more we want to get out of it, the more varied must be our approaches to it. From this it follows that our judgment must be based on all the relevant information derived from all the relevant approaches which we have brought to bear on the text. And just as we said that no single approach can exhaust all the meanings in a work of literature, so we say now that no single criterion of judgment can exhaust all its values. We must ask first, that a work of literature create for us an experience which is intense and moving; for this is the primary condition of its right to be considered a work of art at all, and then we can go on to say that that work which engages us more fully on more levels of our being is a greater work than one which is more limited in the range of experience it conveys. For this reason, we judge *Othello* to be a greater work than *To His Coy Mistress*, though not a better work for both communicate intense and moving experience; but because *Othello* does engage us more fully on more levels of our being, it throws more light on the experience from which it has been derived. *Othello* has intensity as well as range, sensitivity as well as variety, depth as well as scope; it encompasses a larger and more significant area of experience than *To His Coy Mistress* can take in, or rather sets itself out to include and consequently *Othello* ranges over that experience with correspondingly greater power, penetration, and purpose. The greater the work of literature, therefore, the more there is to be had out of it, and the less it can be exhausted, both of meaning and of value.

Having made these observations in line with our duties as editors and teachers, we invite you now to read the works of literature themselves for all the talk about literature can never serve as a substitute for the experience of literature itself.



## THE CREATIVE ACT

SECTION 13 of

## The Horse's Mouth

*Joyce Cary*

Now an old man and by ordinary standards a failure both as a man and as an artist Gulley Jimson an eccentric English painter looks back on his wretched career and thinks of how he came to be an artist In the course of his reflections he gives us an unparalleled insight into the motivations and processes of mind of the artist and at the same time creates the striking figure of the modern artist the man who stands alone at odds with society at odds often with himself but caught in the grip of the need to subdue his medium and to say what he has to say in the only way he thinks right to say it no matter whether he is understood or not and regardless of the consequences to himself and to society Undisciplined contemptuous of ordinary standards and a mocker of ordinary values passionate willful a man of deep feeling he is precisely the kind of artist Plato feared most a Gulley Jimson let loose in the Platonic state would mean the ruin of both yet one feels that in the end Jimson would survive for he has learned through suffering he meets the evil of the world by facing it being defeated by it and so conquering it—and not by avoiding it Plato had argued that the artist was but the imitator of other men's skills but Jimson would reply that the artist possesses a skill uniquely his own for all the superficial wildness of his ways he too bows to a master his master is not the state but art

IF WHILE I am dictating this memoir, to my honorary secretary, who has got the afternoon off from the cheese counter, I may make a personal explanation which won't be published anyhow I never meant to be an artist You say who does? But I even meant not to be an artist because I'd lived with one and I couldn't forget seeing my father a little grey bearded old man crying one day in the garden I don't know why he was crying He had a letter in his hand perhaps it was to tell him that the Academy had thrown out three more Jimson girls in three more Jimson gardens I hated art when I was young and I was very glad to get the chance of going into an office My mother's cousin, down at Annbridge near Exmoor had pity on us, and took me into his country office He had an engineering business When I came to London in '99 I was a regular clerk I had a bowler a home, a nice little wife a nice little baby and a bank account I sent money to my mother every week, and helped

my sister A nice happy respectable young man I enjoyed life in those days

But one day when I was sitting in our London office on Bankside I dropped a blot on an envelope and having nothing to do just then I pushed it about with my pen to try and make it look more like a face And the next thing was I was drawing figures in red and black on the same envelope And from that moment I was done for Everyone was very sympathetic The boss sent for me at the end of the month and said I'm sorry Jimson but I've had another complaint about your work I warned you last week that this was your last chance But I don't want to sack you You might never get another job, and what is going to happen then to your poor young wife and her baby? Look here Jimson I like you everyone likes you You can trust me I hope Tell me what's gone wrong? Never mind what it is I'm not going to be stupid about it Is it debts? You haven't been gambling I suppose Is your petty cash all right? Take a couple of days off and think it over

But of course I couldn't think of anything except how to get my figures right I started as a Classic About 1800 was my period And I was having a hell of a time with my anatomy and the laws of perspective

Her fingers numbered every nerve,  
Just as a miser counts his gold

I spent my holiday at a life class and when I went back to the firm I didn't last two days Of course I was a bad case I had a bad infection galloping art I was at it about twelve hours a day and I had a picture in the Old Water Colour Society that year Very classical Early Turner Almost Sandby

My wife was nearly starving and we had pawned most of the furniture but what did I care? Well of course I worried a bit But I felt like an old master So I was very old I was at about the period when my poor old father was knocked out I'd gone through a lot to get my experience my technique and I was going to paint like that all my life It was the only way to paint I knew all the rules I could turn you off a picture all correct in an afternoon Not that it was what you call a work of imagination It was just a piece of stuff Like a nice sausage Lovely forms But I wasn't looking any more than a sausage machine I was the old school the old Classic the old church

An aged shadow soon he fades  
Wandering round an earthly cot  
Full filled all with gems and gold  
Which he by industry had got

I even sold some pictures nice water colours of London churches But one day I happened to see a



Manet Because some chaps were laughing at it  
 And it gave me the shock of my life Like a flash  
 of lightning It skinned my eyes for me and when  
 I came out I was a different man And I saw the  
 world again the world of colour By Gee and Jay  
 I said I was dead and I didn't know it

Till from the fire on the hearth  
 A little female babe did spring

I felt her jump But of course the old classic put  
 up a fight It was the Church against Darwin the  
 old Lords against the Radicals And I was the battle  
 ground I had a bad time of it that year I couldn't  
 paint at all I botched my nice architectural water  
 colours with impressionist smudges And I made  
 such a mess of my impressionist landscapes that I  
 couldn't bear to look at them myself Of course I  
 lost all my kind patrons The first time but not the  
 last But that didn't upset me What gave me the  
 horrors was that I couldn't paint I was so wretched  
 that I hardly noticed when we were sold up and  
 my wife went off or even when my mother died  
 It was a good thing she did die or she would have  
 had to go to the workhouse And really I suppose  
 she died of a broken heart at seeing her youngest  
 go down the drain

Of course I was a bit upset about it I thought  
 my heart was broken But even at the funeral I  
 couldn't tell whether I was in agony about my poor  
 mother's death or about my awful pictures For I  
 didn't know what to do with myself My old stuff  
 made me sick In the living world that I'd suddenly  
 discovered it looked like a rotten corpse that some  
 body had forgotten to bury But the new world  
 wouldn't come to my hand I couldn't catch it that  
 lovely vibrating light that floating tissue of colour  
 Not local colour but aerial colour a sensation of the  
 mind that maiden vision

And she was all of solid fire  
 And gems and gold that none his hand  
 Dares stretch to touch her baby form  
 Or wrap her in her swaddling band  
 But she comes to the man she loves  
 If young or old or rich or poor  
 They soon drive out the aged host  
 A beggar at another's door

I got her after about four years At last I got rid  
 of every bit of the grand style the old church I  
 came to the pure sensation without a thought in  
 my head Just a harp in the wind And a lot of my  
 stuff was good Purest go as you please

And I sold it too I made more money than than  
 I ever did again People like impressionism Still do,  
 because it hasn't any idea in it Because it doesn't  
 ask anything from them—because it's just a nice  
 sensation a little song Good for the drawing room  
 Tea cakes

But I got tired of sugar I grew up

And when they showed me a room full of my  
 own confections I felt quite sick Like grandpa  
 brought to a nursery tea As for icing any more  
 eclairs I couldn't bring myself to it I gradually  
 stopped painting and took to arguing instead Argu-  
 ing and reading and drinking, politics philosophy  
 and pub crawling all the things chaps do who  
 can't do anything else Who've run up against the  
 buffers And I got in such a low state that I was  
 frightened of the dark Yes as every night ap-  
 proached, I fairly trembled I knew what it would  
 be like A vacuum sucking one's skull into a black  
 glass bottle all in silence I used to go out and get  
 drunk to keep some kind of illumination going in  
 my dome

He wanders weeping far away,  
 Until some other take him in,  
 Oft blind and age bent some distress  
 Until he can a maiden win

And then I began to make a few little pencil  
 sketches studies and I took Blake's job drawings  
 out of somebody's bookshelf and peeped into them  
 and shut them up again Like a chap who's fallen  
 down the cellar steps and knocked his skull in and  
 opens a window too quick on something too big  
 I did a little modeling and tried my hand at compo-  
 sition I found myself wandering round the marbles  
 at the Brit Mus and brooding over the torso of  
 some battered old Venus without any head arms  
 or legs and a kind of smallpox all over the rest of  
 her Trying to find out why her lumps seemed so  
 much more important than any bar lady with a  
 gold fringe or water lily pool

And to allay his freezing age  
 The poor man takes her in his arms,  
 The cottage fades before his sight  
 The garden and its lovely charms

Good bye impressionism anarchism, nihilism, Dar-  
 winism and the giddy goat now staggering with  
 rheumatism Hail the new Classic But you might  
 say it was in the air about then at the turn of the  
 century when the young Liberals were beginning  
 to bend away from *laissez faire* and to look for their  
 Marx and science took a mathematical twist and  
 the old biologists found themselves high and dry  
 among the has-beens, blowing their own trumpets  
 because no one else would do it for them And I  
 studied Blake and Persian carpets and Raphael's  
 cartoons and took to painting walls

But I rubbed most of them out again They  
 looked like bad imitations of the old masters or  
 made-up pompous stuff They didn't belong to the  
 world I lived in A new world with a new formal  
 character

I had a worse time than the last time I drank  
more than ever To keep up my self respect But it  
didn't have the same effect I was gloomy even in  
drink I didn't seem to be getting anywhere very  
much If there was anywhere to get to

The stars sun moon all shrink away,  
A desert vast without a bound  
And nothing left to eat or drink  
And a dark desert all around

And of course no one would buy anything They  
didn't know what I was driving at I probably  
didn't know myself I was like a chap under witch  
craft I didn't know if I was after a real girl or a  
succubus in the shape of a fairy

The honey of her infant lips  
The bread and wine of her sweet smile  
The wild game of her roving eye,  
Does him to infancy beguile  
Like the wild stag she flees away  
Her fear plants many a thicket wild,  
While he pursues her night and day  
By various arts of love beguiled

The job is always to get hold of the form you  
need And nothing is so coy Cezanne and the  
cubists when they chucked up old doddering im-  
pressionism caught their maidens But the cubists  
did it too easily They knocked them down with  
hammers and tied up the fragments with wire Most  
of em died and the rest look more like bird cages  
than forms of intuition and delight Cezanne was  
the real classic The full band Well I suppose poor  
old Cezanne did more wandering in the desert even  
than me—he wandered all his life The maiden  
fled away so fast that he hardly caught her once a  
year And then she soon dodged off again

By various arts of love and hate,  
Till the wide desert planted o'er  
With labyrinths of wayward love  
Where roam the lion the wolf and boar

I painted some cubists myself once and thought  
I'd got my maiden under padlock at last No more  
chase, no more trouble The formula of a new  
classical art And of course a lot of other people

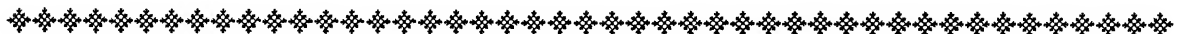
thought so too A lot of em are painting cubism  
even now and making a steady income and sleep-  
ing quiet in their beds and keeping their wives in  
fancy frocks and their children at school

The trees bring forth sweet ecstasy  
To all who in the desert roam  
Till many a city there is built  
And many a pleasant shepherd's home

Cubism On the gravel All services Modern  
democracy Organized comforts The Socialist state  
Bureaucratic liberalism Scientific management A  
new security But I didn't live there long myself I  
got indigestion I got a nice girl in my eye, or perhaps  
she got after me After 1930 even Hickson stopped  
buying me And tonight it seems that I can't paint  
at all I've lost sight of the maiden altogether I  
wander weeping far away until some other take  
me in The police It's quite time I'm getting too  
old for this rackety life

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the style and tone of the passage?
- 2 What is the significance of the challenge of the blot of ink?
- 3 What were Jimson's ideals as a youth? Why does he reject them? Is he right?
- 4 Note that his artistic growth is composed of a series of acceptances and rejections the Classic gives way to the classics impressionism gives way to form What does Jimson get out of these various movements? Why does he reject them? What is he looking for?
- 5 What does he mean by form? Why does he place so much emphasis on it?
- 6 From what Jimson says what sort of pictures do you imagine he painted?
- 7 Was he right in rejecting his responsibilities to his family to society and to himself?
- 8 What would Plato say of such a man? What would be Jimson's reply? Which would be right?
- 9 What parallels do you find between the way in which Jimson thinks as a painter and Spender thinks as a poet?
- 10 What are the characteristics of the artistic process? Do these differ from the other thinking processes particularly those associated with scientific and religious thinking?





## LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

FROM

## The Republic

*Plato*

Though the direction of contemporary criticism is away from Plato that is away from the position which holds that art is an element in society and as such exercises an effect for good or for evil on society and must therefore be judged accordingly nevertheless the questions which Plato raised as to the proper place and value of art in society have haunted and in these days of the supremacy of the state continue to haunt all lovers of art For all the charm and ease of his manner and style there is something ruthless about Plato's logic once a point however slight is conceded he drives relentlessly to his conclusion and nowhere is this trait better exemplified than in his remarks on poetry where the reader—having admitted some distance back that he thinks the safety of the state is a good thing—is suddenly confronted with the realization that he has now agreed to drive the poets from the state But art was no joking matter to Plato for he could not see that the artist has any more right to be excused from the processes and responsibilities of history than any other individual in the state on the contrary precisely because his media are so attractive and persuasive the artist cannot in a state which has been constructed to resist change be permitted to be free he can say only those things which perpetuate not perplex Basic to Plato's theory of the state is the assumption that the permanence of the state is of greater consequence than the freedom of its individual constituents and if one is afraid of change this is an assumption all too easily granted Against Plato's logical rigor the liberal defense of the freedom of art is a thin shield for it makes the assumption that in the long run the good and the true will win out over the bad and the false Unfortunately the market place of ideas like many other places where things are bought and sold can be rigged and usually not in favor of the good and the true The more recent critical approach which concentrates on the technique of the medium side steps the problem of judgment and value altogether It is not surprising then that as much as one wishes to believe Plato wrong there stands the charm of his reasoning as challenging today as when it was first announced more than two thousand years ago

WHAT IS this education to be, then? Perhaps we shall hardly invent a system better than the one which long experience has worked out with its two branches for the cultivation of the mind

and of the body And I suppose we shall begin with the mind before we start physical training

Naturally

Under that head will come stories<sup>1</sup> and of these there are two kinds some are true others fictitious Both must come in but we shall begin our education with the fictitious kind

I don't understand he said

Don't you understand I replied that we begin by telling children stories which taken as a whole are fiction though they contain some truth? Such story telling begins at an earlier age than physical training that is why I said we should start with the mind

You are right

And the beginning as you know is always the most important part especially in dealing with any thing young and tender That is the time when the character is being moulded and easily takes any impress one may wish to stamp on it

Quite true

Then shall we simply allow our children to listen to any stories that anyone happens to make up and so receive into their minds ideas often the very opposite of those we shall think they ought to have when they are grown up?

No certainly not

It seems then, our first business will be to supervise the making of fables and legends rejecting all which are unsatisfactory, and we shall induce nurses and mothers to tell their children only those which we have approved and to think more of moulding their souls with these stories than they now do of rubbing their limbs to make them strong and shapely Most of the stories now in use must be discarded

What kind do you mean?

If we take the great ones we shall see in them the pattern of all the rest which are bound to be of the same stamp and to have the same effect

No doubt, but which do you mean by the great ones?

The stories in Hesiod and Homer and the poets in general who have at all times composed fictitious tales and told them to mankind

Which kind are you thinking of, and what fault do you find in them?

The worst of all faults, especially if the story is ugly and immoral as well as false—misrepresenting the nature of gods and heroes like an artist whose picture is utterly unlike the object he sets out to draw

That is certainly a serious fault but give me an example

A signal instance of false invention about the highest matters is that foul story which Hesiod re-

<sup>1</sup> In a wide sense tales legends myths narratives in poetry or prose

peats of the deeds of Uranus and the vengeance of Cronos,<sup>2</sup> and then there is the tale of Cronos's doings and of his son's treatment of him. Even if such tales were true I should not have supposed they should be lightly told to thoughtless young people. If they cannot be altogether suppressed they should only be revealed in a mystery to which access should be as far as possible restricted by requiring the sacrifice not of a pig but of some victim such as very few could afford.<sup>3</sup>

It is true those stories are objectionable.

Yes and not to be repeated in our commonwealth. Adeimantus: We shall not tell a child that if he commits the foulest crimes or goes to any length in punishing his father's misdeeds he will be doing nothing out of the way but only what the first and greatest of the gods have done before him.

I agree, such stories are not fit to be repeated.

Nor yet any tales of warfare and intrigues and battles of gods against gods which are equally untrue. If our future Guardians are to think it a disgrace to quarrel lightly with one another we shall not let them embroider robes with the Battle of the Giants<sup>4</sup> or tell them of all the other feuds of gods and heroes with their kith and kin. If by any means we can make them believe that no one has ever had a quarrel with a fellow citizen and it is a sin to have one that is the sort of thing our old men and women should tell children from the first and as they grow older, we must make the poets write for them in the same strain. Stories like those of Hera being bound by her son or of Hephaestus flung from heaven by his father for taking his mother's part when she was beaten and all those battles of the gods in Homer must not be admitted into our state whether they be allegorical or not. A child cannot distinguish the allegorical sense from the literal, and the ideas he takes in at that age are likely to become indelibly fixed hence the great importance of seeing that the first stories he hears shall be designed to produce the best possible effect on his character.

Yes, that is reasonable. But if we were asked which of these stories in particular are of the right quality, what should we answer?

I replied: You and I, Adeimantus, are not for the moment, poets but founders of a commonwealth. As such it is not our business to invent stories ourselves, but only to be clear as to the main outlines

to be followed by the poets in making their stories and the limits beyond which they must not be allowed to go.

True, but what are these outlines for any account they may give of the gods?

Of this sort said I: A poet whether he is writing epic lyric or drama surely ought always to represent the divine nature as it really is. And the truth is that that nature is good and must be described as such.

Unquestionably.

Well, nothing that is good can be harmful and if it cannot do harm it can do no evil and so it cannot be responsible for any evil.

I agree.

Again goodness is beneficent and hence the cause of well-being.

Yes.

Goodness then is not responsible for everything but only for what is as it should be. It is not responsible for evil.<sup>5</sup>

Quite true.

It follows then that the divine being good is not as most people say responsible for everything that happens to mankind but only for a small part for the good things in human life are far fewer than the evil and whereas the good must be ascribed to heaven only we must look elsewhere for the cause of evils.

I think that is perfectly true.

So we shall condemn as a foolish error Homer's description of Zeus as the dispenser of both good and ill.<sup>6</sup> We shall disapprove when Pandarus violation of oaths and treaties is said to be the work of Zeus and Athena or when Themis and Zeus are said to have caused strife among the gods. Nor must we allow our young people to be told by Aeschylus that Heaven implants guilt in man when his will is to destroy a house utterly. If a poet writes of the sorrows of Niobe or the calamities of the house of Pelops or of the Trojan war either he must not speak of them as the work of a god or if he does so he must devise some such explanation as we are now requiring: he must say that what the god did was just and good and the sufferers were the better for being chastised. One who pays a just penalty must not be called miserable and his misery then laid at heaven's door. The poet will only be allowed to say that the wicked were miserable because they needed chastisement and the punishment of heaven did them good. If our commonwealth is to be well-ordered we must fight to the last against any member of it being suffered to speak of the divine which is good, being respon-

Hesiod *Theogony* 154 ff. A primitive myth of the forcing apart of Sky (Uranus) and Earth (Gaia) by their son Cronos who mutilated his father. Zeus again took vengeance on his father Cronos for trying to destroy his children. These stories were sometimes cited to justify ill-treatment of parents.

<sup>3</sup> The usual sacrifice at the Eleusinian Mysteries was a pig which was cheap. In a mystery unedifying legends might be given an allegorical interpretation a method which had been applied to Homer since the end of the sixth century B.C.

<sup>4</sup> Such a robe was woven by maidens for the statue of Athena at the Great Panathenaea.

<sup>5</sup> The words of Lachesis in the concluding myth (617 ff. p. 357) illustrate Plato's meaning.

<sup>6</sup> Some further instances from Homer are here omitted.

sible for evil Neither young nor old must listen to such tales in prose or verse Such doctrine would be impious self contradictory and disastrous to our commonwealth

I agree he said and I would vote for a law to that effect

Well then that shall be one of our laws about religion The first principle to which all must conform in speech or writing is that heaven is not responsible for everything but only for what is good

I am quite satisfied

Now what of this for a second principle? Do you think of a god as a sort of magician who might for his own purposes appear in various shapes now actually passing into a number of different forms, now deluding us into believing he has done so or is his nature simple and of all things the least likely to depart from its proper form?

I cannot say offhand

Well if a thing passes out of its proper form must not the change come either from within or from some outside cause?

Yes

Is it not true then that things in the most perfect condition are the least affected by changes from outside? Take the effect on the body of food and drink or of exertion or the effect of sunshine and wind on a plant the healthiest and strongest suffer the least change Again the bravest and wisest spirit is least disturbed by external influence Even manufactured things—furniture houses clothes—suffer least from wear and tear when they are well made and in good condition So this immunity to change from outside is characteristic of anything which thanks to art or nature or both, is in a satisfactory state

That seems true

But surely the state of the divine nature must be perfect in every way, and would therefore be the last thing to suffer transformations from any outside cause

Yes

Well then would a god change or alter himself?

If he changes at all it can only be in that way

Would it be a change for the better or for the worse?

It could only be for the worse for we cannot admit any imperfection in divine goodness or beauty

True and that being so do you think Admetantus that anyone god or man would deliberately make himself worse in any respect?

That is impossible

Then a god cannot desire to change himself Being as perfect as he can be every god it seems remains simply and for ever in his own form

That is the necessary conclusion

If so my friend the poets must not tell us that the gods go to and fro among the cities of men disguised as strangers of all sorts from far countries nor must they tell any of those false tales of Proteus and Thetis transforming themselves or bring Hera on the stage in the guise of a priestess collecting alms for the life giving children of Inachus the river of Argos? Mothers again are not to follow these suggestions and scare young children with mischievous stories of spirits that go about by night in all sorts of outlandish shapes They would only be blaspheming the gods and at the same time making cowards of their children

No that must not be allowed

But are we to think that the gods though they do not really change trick us by some magic into believing that they appear in many different forms?

Perhaps

What? said I would a god tell a falsehood or act one by deluding us with an apparition?

I cannot say

Do you not know that the true falsehood—if that is a possible expression—is a thing that all gods and men abominate?

What do you mean?

This I replied no one if he could help it would tolerate the presence of untruth in the most vital part of his nature concerning the most vital matters There is nothing he would fear so much as to harbour falsehood in that quarter

Still I do not understand

Because you think I mean something out of the ordinary All I mean is the presence of falsehood in the soul concerning reality To be deceived about the truth of things and so to be in ignorance and error and to harbour untruth in the soul is a thing no one would consent to Falsehood in that quarter is abhorred above everything

It is indeed

Well then as I was saying this ignorance in the soul which entertains untruth is what really deserves to be called the true falsehood for the spoken falsehood is only the embodiment or image of a previous condition of the soul not pure unadulterated falsity Is it not so?

It is

This real falsehood then is hateful to gods and men equally But is the spoken falsehood always a hateful thing? Is it not sometimes helpful—in war, for instance or as a sort of medicine to avert some fit of folly or madness that might make a friend attempt some mischief? And in those legends we were discussing just now we can turn fiction to account, not knowing the facts about the distant

The allusions are to the *Oedipus* and to a lost play of Aeschylus

past we can make our fiction as good an embodiment of truth as possible

Yes that is so

Well in which of these ways would falsehood be useful to a god? We cannot think of him as embodying truth in fiction for lack of information about the past

No that would be absurd

So there is no room in this case for poetical inventions. Would he need to tell untruths because he has enemies to fear?

Of course not

Or friends who are mad or foolish?

No a fool or a madman could hardly enjoy the friendship of the gods

Gods then have no motive for lying. There can be no falsehood of any sort in the divine nature

None

We conclude then that a god is a being of entire simplicity and truthfulness in word and in deed. In himself he does not change, nor does he delude others either in dreams or in waking moments by apparitions or oracles or signs

I agree after all you have said

You will assent then to this as a second principle to guide all that is to be said or written about the gods: that they do not transform themselves by any magic or mislead us by illusions or lies. For all our admiration of Homer we shall not approve his story of the dream Zeus sent to Agamemnon<sup>8</sup> nor yet those lines of Aeschylus where Thetis tells how Apollo sang at her wedding

Boding good fortune for my child long life  
From sickness free in all things blest by heaven  
His song so crowned with triumph cheered my heart  
I thought those lips divine with prophecy  
Instinct could never lie. But he this guest  
Whose voice so rang with promise at the feast,  
Even he has slain my son

If a poet writes of the gods in this way we shall be angry and refuse him the means to produce his play. Nor shall we allow such poetry to be used in educating the young if we mean our Guardians to be godfearing and to reproduce the divine nature in themselves so far as man may

I entirely agree with your principles, he said and I would have them observed as laws

So far, then as religion is concerned, we have settled what sorts of stories about the gods may or may not be told to children who are to hold heaven and their parents in reverence and to value good relations with one another

Yes, he said, and I believe we have settled right

We also want them to be brave. So the stories they hear should be such as to make them unafraid

<sup>8</sup> *Iliad* 11.1 ff

of death. A man with that fear in his heart cannot be brave, can he?

Surely not

And can a man be free from that fear and prefer death in battle to defeat and slavery if he believes in a world below which is full of terrors?

No

Here again then our supervision will be needed. The poets must be told to speak well of that other world. The gloomy descriptions they now give must be forbidden not only as untrue, but as injurious to our future warriors. We shall strike out all lines like these

I would rather be on earth as the hired servant of another in the house of a landless man with little to live on than be king over all the dead<sup>9</sup>

or these

Alack there is then even in the house of Death a spirit or a shade but the wits dwell in it no more<sup>10</sup>

We shall ask Homer and the poets in general not to mind if we cross out all passages of this sort. If most people enjoy them as good poetry, that is all the more reason for keeping them from children or grown men who are to be free, fearing slavery more than death

I entirely agree

We must also get rid of all that terrifying language, the very sound of which is enough to make one shiver: loathsome Styx, the River of Wailing, infernal spirits, anatomies and so on. For other purposes such language may be well enough, but we are afraid that fever consequent upon such shivering fits may melt down the fine tempered spirit of our Guardians. So we will have none of it and we shall encourage writing in the opposite strain

Clearly

Another thing we must banish is the wailing and lamentations of the famous heroes. For this reason if two friends are both men of high character neither of them will think that death has any terrors for his comrade, and so he will not mourn for his friend's sake, as if something terrible had befallen him

No

We also believe that such a man, above all possessions within himself all that is necessary for a good life and is least dependent on others, so that he has less to fear from the loss of a son or brother or of his wealth or any other possession. When such misfortune comes he will bear it patiently without lamenting

<sup>9</sup> Spoken by the ghost of Achilles *Od.* xi. 489

<sup>10</sup> Spoken by Achilles when the ghost of Patroclus eludes his embrace *Iliad* xxiii. 103. Other lines from Homer describing the misery of the dead are omitted

True

We shall do well then to strike out descriptions of the heroes bewailing the dead, and make over such lamentations to women (and not to women of good standing either) and to men of low character so that the Guardians we are training for our country may disdain to imitate them

Quite right

Once more then, we shall ask Homer and the other poets not to represent Achilles the son of a goddess as tossing from side to side now on his face, now on his back and then as rising up and wandering distractedly on the seashore or pouring ashes on his head with both hands with all those tears and wailings the poet describes nor to tell how Priam who was near akin to the gods, rolled in the dung as he made entreaty calling on each man by name <sup>11</sup> Still more earnestly shall we ask them not to represent gods as lamenting or at any rate not to dare to misrepresent the highest god by making him say Woe is me that Sarpedon whom I love above all men is fated to die at the hands of Patroclus For if our young men take such unworthy descriptions seriously instead of laughing at them they will hardly feel themselves who are but men above behaving in that way or repress any temptation to do so They would not be ashamed of giving way with complaints and outcries on every trifling occasion and that would be contrary to the principle we have deduced and shall adhere to until someone can show us a better

It would

Again our Guardians ought not to be overmuch given to laughter Violent laughter tends to provoke an equally violent reaction We must not allow poets to describe men of worth being overcome by it still less should Homer speak of the gods giving way to unquenchable laughter at the sight of Hephaestus bustling from room to room That will be against your principles

Yes if you choose to call them mine

Again a high value must be set upon truthfulness If we were right in saying that gods have no use for falsehood and it is useful to mankind only in the way of a medicine obviously a medicine should be handled by no one but a physician

Obviously

If anyone then is to practise deception either on the country's enemies or on its citizens it must be the Rulers of the commonwealth acting for its benefit, no one else may meddle with this privilege For a private person to mislead such Rulers we shall declare to be a worse offence than for a patient to mislead his doctor or an athlete his trainer about his bodily condition or for a seaman to misinform

his captain about the state of the ship or of the crew So if anyone else in our commonwealth of all that practise crafts physician seer or carpenter is caught not telling the truth the Rulers will punish him for introducing a practice as fatal and subversive in a state as it would be in a ship

It would certainly be as fatal if action were suited to the word

Next our young men will need self control and for the mass of mankind that chiefly means obeying their governors and themselves governing their appetite for the pleasures of eating and drinking and sex Here again we shall disapprove of much that we find in Homer <sup>12</sup>

I agree

Whereas we shall allow the poets to represent any examples of self control and fortitude on the part of famous men and admit such lines as these Odysseus smote his breast chiding his heart Endure my heart thou has borne worse things than these

Yes certainly

Nor again must these men of ours be lovers of money or ready to take bribes They must not hear that gods and great princes may be won by gifts

No that sort of thing cannot be approved

If it were not for my regard for Homer I should not hesitate to call it downright impiety to make Achilles say to Apollo Thou has wronged me thou deadliest of gods I would surely requite thee if I had but the power And all those stories of Achilles dragging Hector round the tomb of Patroclus and slaughtering captives on the funeral pyre we shall condemn as false and not let our Guardians believe that Achilles who was the son of a goddess and of the wise Peleus third in descent from Zeus and the pupil of the sage Chiron was so disordered that his heart was a prey to two contrary maladies mean covetousness and arrogant contempt of gods and men

You are right

We have now distinguished the kinds of stories that may and may not be told about gods and demi-gods heroes and the world below There remains the literature concerned with human life

Clearly

We cannot lay down rules for that at our present stage

Why not?

Because I suspect we shall find both poets and prose writers guilty of the most serious misstatements about human life making out that wrongdoers are often happy and just men miserable that injus-

<sup>11</sup> When Priam saw Achilles maltreating the body of Hector *Iliad* xxii 414

<sup>12</sup> In order to save space illustrations from Homer of the self-indulgence of heroes and gods and of disrespect for rulers are omitted here and below

tice pays if not detected and that my being just is to another man's advantage but a loss to myself. We shall have to prohibit such poems and tales and tell them to compose others in the contrary sense. Don't you think so?

I am sure of it.

Well, as soon as you admit that I am right there may I not claim that we shall have reached agreement on the subject of all this inquiry?

That is a fair assumption.

Then we must postpone any decision as to how the truth is to be told about human life until we have discovered the real nature of justice and proved that it is intrinsically profitable to its possessor no matter what reputation he may have in the eyes of the world.

That is certainly true.

One thing, however, is easily settled, namely that grace and seemliness of form and movement go with good rhythm, ungracefulness and unseemliness with bad.

Naturally.

And again good or bad rhythm and also tunefulness or discord in music go with the quality of the poetry for they will be modelled after its form if, as we have said, metre and music must be adapted to the sense of the words.

Well, they must be so adapted.

And the content of the poetry and the manner in which it is expressed depend in their turn on moral character.

Of course.

Thus then excellence of form and content in discourse<sup>13</sup> and of musical expression and rhythm and grace of form and movement all depend on goodness of nature, by which I mean not the foolish simplicity sometimes called by courtesy good nature but a nature in which goodness of character has been well and truly established.

Yes, certainly.

So if our young men are to do their proper work in life they must follow after these qualities wherever they may be found. And they are to be found in every sort of workmanship, such as painting, weaving, embroidery, architecture, the making of furniture, and also in the human frame and in all the works of nature. In all these grace and seemliness may be present or absent. And the absence of grace, rhythm, harmony is nearly allied to baseness of thought and expression and baseness of character, whereas their presence goes with that moral excellence and self-mastery of which they are the embodiment.

<sup>13</sup> *Eulogia* is given an unusual sense in order to bring in the associations of *eulogos* = reasonable, the poetry being the intellectual element.

That is perfectly true.

Then we must not only compel our poets on pain of expulsion to make their poetry the express image of noble character, we must also supervise craftsmen of every kind and forbid them to leave the stamp of baseness, licence, meanness, unseemliness on painting and sculpture or building or any other work of their hands, and anyone who cannot obey shall not practise his art in our commonwealth. We would not have our Guardians grow up among representations of moral deformity as in some foul pasture where day after day feeding on every poisonous weed they would little by little gather insensibly a mass of corruption in their very souls. Rather we must seek out those craftsmen whose instinct guides them to whatsoever is lovely and gracious so that our young men dwelling in a wholesome climate may drink in good from every quarter whence like a breeze bearing health from happy regions some influence from noble works constantly falls upon eye and ear from childhood upward and imperceptibly draws them into sympathy and harmony with the beauty of reason whose impress they take.

There could be no better upbringing than that.

Hence Glaucon I continued the decisive importance of education in poetry and music, rhythm and harmony sink deep into the recesses of the soul and take the strongest hold there bringing that grace of body and mind which is only to be found in one who is brought up in the right way. Moreover a proper training in this kind makes a man quick to perceive any defect or ugliness in art or in nature. Such deformity will rightly disgust him. Approving all that is lovely he will welcome it home with joy into his soul and nourished thereby grow into a man of a noble spirit. All that is ugly and disgraceful he will rightly condemn and abhor while he is still too young to understand the reason, and when reason comes he will greet her as a friend with whom his education has made him long familiar.

I agree, he said, that is the purpose of education in literature and music.

Now in learning to read I went on, we were proficient when we could recognize the few letters there are wherever they occur in all the multitude of different words, never thinking them beneath our notice in the most insignificant word but bent upon distinguishing them everywhere because we should not be scholars until we had got thus far.

True.

Also we must know the letters themselves before we can recognize images of them reflected (say) in water or in a mirror. The same skill and practice are needed in either case.

Yes.

Then is it not true in the same way that we and

these Guardians we are to bring up will never be fully cultivated until we can recognize the essential Forms of temperance courage liberality high mindedness and all other kindred qualities and also their opposites wherever they occur. We must be able to discern the presence of these Forms themselves and also of their images in anything that contains them realizing that to recognize either the same skill and practice are required and that the most insignificant instance is not beneath our notice.

That must surely be so.

And for him who has eyes to see it there can be no fairer sight than the harmonious union of a noble character in the soul with an outward form answering thereto and bearing the same stamp of beauty.

There cannot.

And the fairest is also the most lovable.

Of course.

So the man who has been educated in poetry and music will be in love with such a person but never with one who lacks this harmony.

Not if the defect should lie in the soul if it were only some bodily blemish he would accept that with patience and goodwill.

I understand said I you are or have been in love with a person like that and I agree. But tell me is excessive pleasure compatible with temperance?

How can it be when it unsettles the mind no less than pain?

Or with virtue in general?

Certainly not.

It has more to do with insolence and profligacy?

Yes.

And is there any pleasure you can name that is greater and keener than sexual pleasure?

No nor any that is more like frenzy.

Whereas love rightfully is such a passion as beauty combined with a noble and harmonious character may inspire in a temperate and cultivated mind. It must therefore be kept from all contact with licentiousness and frenzy and where a passion of this rightful sort exists the lover and his beloved must have nothing to do with the pleasure in question.

Certainly not Socrates.

It appears then that in this commonwealth we are founding you will have a law to the effect that a lover may seek the company of his beloved and, with his consent kiss and embrace him like a son with honourable intent but must never be suspected of any further familiarity, on pain of being thought ill-bred and without any delicacy of feeling.

I quite agree.

Then is not our account of education in poetry and music now complete? It has ended where it ought to end in the love of beauty.

I agree.

INDEED I continued our commonwealth has many features which make me think it was based on very sound principles especially our rule not on any account to admit the poetry of dramatic representation.<sup>14</sup> Now that we have distinguished the several parts of the soul it seems to me clearer than ever that such poetry must be firmly excluded.

What makes you say so?

Between ourselves—for you will not denounce me to the tragedians and the other dramatists—poetry of that sort seems to be injurious to minds which do not possess the antidote in a knowledge of its real nature.

What have you in mind?

I must speak out in spite of a certain affection and reverence I have had from a child for Homer who seems to have been the original master and guide of all this imposing company of tragic poets.<sup>15</sup> However no man must be honoured above the truth so as I say I must speak my mind.

Do by all means.

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True but when you are there I should not be very desirous to tell what I saw however plainly. You must use your own eyes.

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I do.

Then let us take any set of things you choose. For instance there are any number of beds or of tables but only two Forms one of Bed and one of Table.

Yes.

And we are in the habit of saying that the craftsman when he makes the beds or tables we use or whatever it may be has before his mind the Form<sup>16</sup> of one or other of these pieces of furniture. The Form itself is, of course not the work of any craftsman. How could it be?

It could not.

Now what name would you give to a craftsman

<sup>14</sup> At 398 A (p. 85) Plato seemed to exclude all dramatic poetry because this contains no narrative but involves the impersonation (*mimesis*) of all types of character good or bad whereas epic for instance can limit speeches in character to the representation of virtuous or heroic types. He will now argue that all poetry and other forms of art are essentially *mimesis*. The meaning of the word is obviously enlarged where he speaks just below of representation in general.

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who can produce all the things made by every sort of workman?

He would need to have very remarkable powers!

Wait a moment and you will have even better reason to say so. For besides producing any kind of artificial thing, this same craftsman can create all plants and animals, himself included, and earth and sky and gods and the heavenly bodies and all the things under the earth in Hades.

That sounds like a miraculous feat of virtuosity.

Are you incredulous? Tell me, do you think there could be no such craftsman at all, or that there might be someone who could create all these things in one sense though not in another?<sup>17</sup> Do you not see that you could do it yourself in a way?

In what way, I should like to know.

There is no difficulty. In fact there are several ways in which the thing can be done quite quickly. The quickest perhaps would be to take a mirror and turn it round in all directions. In a very short time you could produce sun and stars and earth and yourself and all the other animals and plants and lifeless objects which we mentioned just now.

Yes, in appearance, but not the actual things.

Quite so, you are helping out my argument. My notion is that a painter is a craftsman of that kind. You may say that the things he produces are not real, but there is a sense in which he too does produce a bed.

Yes, the appearance of one.

And what of the carpenter? Were you not saying just now that he only makes a particular bed, not what we call the Form or essential nature of Bed?

Yes, I was.

If so, what he makes is not the reality, but only something that resembles it. It would not be right to call the work of a carpenter or of any other handicraftsman a perfectly real thing, would it?

Not in the view of people accustomed to thinking on these lines.<sup>18</sup>

We must not be surprised then, if even an actual bed is a somewhat shadowy thing as compared with reality.

True.

Now shall we make use of this example to throw light on our question as to the true nature of this artist who represents things? We have here three sorts of bed, one which exists in the nature of things

and which I imagine we could only describe as a product of divine workmanship, another made by the carpenter and a third by the painter. So the three kinds of bed belong respectively to the domains of these three painter, carpenter and god.

Yes.

Now the god made only one ideal or essential Bed, whether by choice or because he was under some necessity not to make more than one, at any rate two or more were not created, nor could they possibly come into being.

Why not?

Because, if he made even so many as two, then once more a single ideal Bed would make its appearance, whose character those two would share, and that one, not the two, would be the essential Bed. Knowing this, the god, wishing to be the real maker of a real Bed, not a particular manufacturer of one particular bed, created one which is essentially unique.

So it appears.

Shall we call him then the author of the true nature of Bed, or something of that sort?

Certainly he deserves the name, since all his works constitute the real nature of things.

And we may call the carpenter the manufacturer of a bed?

Yes.

Can we say the same of the painter?

Certainly not.

Then what is he, with reference to a bed?

I think it would be fairest to describe him as the artist who represents the things which the other two make.

Very well said. I so the work of the artist is at the third remove from the essential nature of the thing?

Exactly.

The tragic poet too is an artist who represents things, so this will apply to him, he and all other artists are, as it were, third in succession from the throne of truth.<sup>19</sup>

Just so.

We are in agreement then about the artist. But now tell me about our painter, which do you think he is trying to represent—the reality that exists in the nature of things, or the products of the craftsman?

The products of the craftsman.

As they are, or as they appear? You have still to draw that distinction.<sup>20</sup>

How do you mean?

<sup>17</sup> The divine Demiurge of the creation myth in the *Timaeus* is pictured as fashioning the whole visible world after the likeness of the eternal Forms, which he does not create but uses as models. He is thus the maker of natural objects corresponding to the carpenter who makes artificial objects, and both as makers of actual things are superior to the painter or poet who makes all things only in a way, by creating mere semblances like images in a mirror.

<sup>18</sup> Familiar with the Platonic doctrine, as opposed to current materialism, which regards the beds we sleep on as real things and the Platonic Form as a mere abstraction, or notion existing only in our minds.

<sup>19</sup> Jowett and Campbell quote from Dante Virgil's description of human art as the grandchild of God, since art is said to copy nature, and nature is the child of God: *si che vostr' arte a Dio quasi è nipote*. *Inferno* xi, 105.

<sup>20</sup> The distinction is needed to exclude another possible sense of *mimesis*, the production of a complete replica.

I mean you may look at a bed or any other object from straight in front or slantwise or at any angle. Is there then any difference in the bed itself or does it merely look different?

It only looks different.

Well that is the point. Does painting aim at reproducing any actual object as it is or the appearance of it as it looks? In other words is it a representation of the truth or of a semblance?

Of a semblance.

The art of representation then is a long way from reality and apparently the reason why there is nothing it cannot reproduce is that it grasps only a small part of any object and that only an image. Your painter for example, will paint us a shoemaker, a carpenter or other workman without understanding any one of their crafts<sup>21</sup> and yet if he were a good painter he might deceive a child or a simple minded person into thinking his picture was a real carpenter if he showed it them at some distance.

No doubt.

But I think there is one view we should take in all such cases. Whenever someone announces that he has met with a person who is master of every trade and knows more about every subject than any specialist we should reply that he is a simple fellow who has apparently fallen in with some illusionist and been tricked into thinking him omniscient because of his own inability to discriminate between knowledge and ignorance and the representation of appearances.

Quite true.

Then it is now time to consider the tragic poets and their master Homer because we are sometimes told that they understand not only all technical matters but also all about human conduct good or bad and about religion for to write well a good poet so they say must know his subject otherwise he could not write about it. We must ask whether these people have not been deluded by meeting with artists who can represent appearances, and in contemplating the poets' work have failed to see that it is at the third remove from reality nothing more than semblances easy to produce with no knowledge of the truth. Or is there something in what they say? Have the good poets a real mastery of the matters on which the public thinks they discuss so well?

It is a question we ought to look into.

Well then if a man were able actually to do the things he represents as well as to produce images of

them do you believe he would seriously give himself up to making these images and take that as a completely satisfying object in life? I should imagine that if he had a real understanding of the actions he represents he would far sooner devote himself to performing them in fact. The memorials he would try to leave after him would be noble deeds and he would be more eager to be the hero whose praises are sung than the poet who sings them.

Yes I agree he would do more good in that way and win a greater name.

Here is a question then, that we may fairly put to Homer or to any other poet. We will leave out of account all mere matters of technical skill we will not ask them to explain for instance why it is that if they have a knowledge of medicine and not merely the art of reproducing the way physicians talk there is no record of any poet ancient or modern curing patients and bequeathing his knowledge to a school of medicine as Asclepius did. But when Homer undertakes to tell us about matters of the highest importance such as the conduct of war, statesmanship or education we have a right to inquire into his competence. Dear Homer we shall say, we have defined the artist as one who produces images at the third remove from reality. If your knowledge of all that concerns human excellence was really such as to raise you above him to the second rank and you could tell what courses of conduct will make men better or worse as individuals or as citizens can you name any country which was better governed thanks to your efforts? Many states great and small have owed much to a good lawgiver such as Lycurgus at Sparta, Charondas in Italy and Sicily and our own Solon. Can you tell us of any that acknowledges a like debt to you?

I should say not. Glaucon replied. The most devout admirers of Homer make no such claim.

Well, do we hear of any war in Homer's day being won under his command or thanks to his advice?

No.

Or of a number of ingenious inventions and technical contrivances which would show that he was a man of practical ability like Thales of Miletus or Anacharsis the Scythian?<sup>22</sup>

Nothing of the sort.

Well if there is no mention of public services do we hear of Homer in his own lifetime presiding like Pythagoras over a band of intimate disciples who loved him for the inspiration of his society and handed down a Homeric way of life like the way of life which the Pythagoreans called after their founder.

<sup>21</sup> Knowledge of arpentry is the essence of the carpenter what makes him a carpenter. The painter could not reproduce this knowledge in his picture even if he possessed it himself. This may sound absurd as an objection to art but Plato is thinking rather of the application to the poet for whom it was claimed that he both possessed technical and moral knowledge and reproduced it in his work.

Thales (early sixth cent.) made a fortune out of a corner in oil mills when his knowledge of the stars enabled him to predict a large olive harvest thus proving that wise men could be rich if they chose (Aristotle *Politics* 1.11). Anacharsis was said to have invented the anchor and the potter's wheel (Diog. Laert. 1.105).

and which to this day distinguishes them from the rest of the world?

No on the contrary Homer's friend with the absurd name Creophylus<sup>23</sup> would look even more absurd when considered as a product of the poet's training if the story is true that he completely neglected Homer during his lifetime.

Yes, so they say. But what do you think Glaucon? If Homer had really possessed the knowledge qualifying him to educate people and make them better men instead of merely giving us a poetical representation of such matters would he not have attracted a host of disciples to love and revere him? After all any number of private teachers like Protagoras of Abdera and Prodicus of Ceos<sup>24</sup> have succeeded in convincing their contemporaries that they will never be fit to manage affairs of state or their own households unless these masters superintend their education, and for this wisdom they are so passionately admired that their pupils are all but ready to carry them about on their shoulders. Can we suppose that Homer's contemporaries or Hesiod's would have left them to wander about reciting their poems if they had really been capable of helping their hearers to be better men? Surely they would sooner have parted with their money and tried to make the poets settle down at home or failing that they would have danced attendance on them wherever they went until they had learnt from them all they could.

I believe you are quite right Socrates.

We may conclude then that all poetry from Homer onwards consists in representing a semblance of its subject whatever it may be including any kind of human excellence with no grasp of the reality. We were speaking just now of the painter who can produce what looks like a shoemaker to the spectator who being as ignorant of shoemaking as he is himself judges only by form and colour. In the same way the poet knowing nothing more than how to represent appearances can paint in words his picture of any craftsman so as to impress an audience which is equally ignorant and judges only by the form of expression the inherent charm of metre rhythm and musical setting is enough to make them think he has discoursed admirably about generalship or shoemaking or any other technical subject. Strip what the poet has to say of its poetical colouring and I think you must have seen what it comes to in plain prose. It is like a face which was never really handsome when it has lost the fresh bloom of youth.

Quite so.

Here is a further point then. The artist we say,

<sup>23</sup> Creophylus' name is supposed to be derived from two words meaning flesh and tribe. He is said to have been an epic poet from Chios.

<sup>24</sup> Two of the most famous Sophists of the fifth century. Plato's *Protagoras* gives a vivid picture of them on a visit to a rich patron at Athens.

this maker of images knows nothing of the reality but only the appearance. But that is only half the story. An artist can paint a bit and bridle while the smith and the leather worker can make them. Does the painter understand the proper form which bit and bridle ought to have? Is it not rather true that not even the craftsmen who make them know that but only the horseman who understands them use?<sup>25</sup>

Quite true.

May we not say generally that there are three arts concerned with any object—the art of using it, the art of making it and the art of representing it?

Yes.

And that the excellence or beauty or rightness of any implement or living creature or action has reference to the use for which it is made or designed by nature?<sup>26</sup>

Yes.

It follows, then, that the user must know most about the performance of the things he uses and must report on its good or bad points to the maker. The flute player for example will tell the instrument maker how well his flutes serve the player's purpose and the other will submit to be instructed about how they should be made. So the man who uses any implement will speak of its merits and defects with knowledge whereas the maker will take his word and possess no more than a correct belief which he is obliged to obtain by listening to the man who knows.

Quite so.

But what of the artist? Has he either knowledge or correct belief? Does he know from direct experience of the subjects he portrays whether his representations are good and right or not? Has he even gained a correct belief by being obliged to listen to some one who does know and can tell him how they ought to be represented?

No, he has neither.

If the artist then has neither knowledge nor even a correct belief about the soundness of his work, what becomes of the poet's wisdom in respect of the subjects of his poetry?

It will not amount to much.

And yet he will go on with his work without knowing in what way any of his representations is sound or unsound. He must apparently be reproducing only what pleases the taste or wins the approval of the ignorant multitude.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> In the *Parmenides* (127 A) Plato's half brother Antiphon who had transferred his interest from philosophy to horses is discovered instructing a smith about making a bit. Ancient craftsmen were far less specialized than ours. A blacksmith and a cobbler to-day might need instructions from a jockey.

<sup>26</sup> This recalls the association of a thing's peculiar excellence or virtue with its function 352 D p 37 f.

<sup>27</sup> Living in the world of appearances the poet reproduces only the many conventional notions of the mass of mankind about what is beautiful or honourable or just (479 D p 188).

Yes what else can he do?

We seem then so far to be pretty well agreed that the artist knows nothing worth mentioning about the subjects he represents and that art is a form of play not to be taken seriously. This description moreover applies above all to tragic poetry whether in epic or dramatic form.

Exactly.<sup>28</sup>

BUT now look here said I: the content of this poetical representation is something at the third remove from reality: is it not?

Yes.

On what part of our human nature, then, does it produce its effect?

What sort of part do you mean?

Let me explain by an analogy. An object seen at a distance does not of course look the same size as when it is close at hand: a straight stick looks bent when part of it is under water and the same thing appears concave or convex to an eye misled by colours. Every sort of confusion like these is to be found in our minds and it is this weakness in our nature that is exploited with a quite magical effect by many tricks of illusion like scene painting and conjuring.

True.

But satisfactory means have been found for dispelling these illusions by measuring, counting and weighing. We are no longer at the mercy of apparent differences of size and quantity and weight: the faculty which has done the counting and measuring or weighing takes control instead. And this can only be the work of the calculating or reasoning element in the soul.

True.

And when this faculty has done its measuring and announced that one quantity is greater than or equal to another we often find that there is an appearance which contradicts it. Now as we have said it is impossible for the same part of the soul to hold two contradictory beliefs at the same time. Hence the part which agrees with the measurements must be a different part from the one which goes against them and its confidence in measurement and calculation is a proof of its being the highest part: the other which contradicts it must be an inferior one.

It must.

This, then, was the conclusion I had in view when I said that paintings and works of art in general are far removed from reality and that the element in

our nature which is accessible to art and responds to its advances is equally far from wisdom. The offspring of a connexion thus formed on no true or sound basis must be as inferior as the parents. This will be true not only of visual art but of art addressed to the ear: poetry as we call it.

Naturally.

Then instead of trusting merely to the analogy from painting let us directly consider that part of the mind to which the dramatic element in poetry<sup>29</sup> appeals and see how much claim it has to serious worth. We can put the question in this way. Drama we say represents the acts and fortunes of human beings. It is wholly concerned with what they do voluntarily or against their will and how they fare with the consequences which they regard as happy or otherwise, and with their feelings of joy and sorrow in all these experiences. That is all: is it not?

Yes.

And in all these experiences has a man an undivided mind? Is there not an internal conflict which sets him at odds with himself in his conduct much as we were saying that the conflict of visual impressions leads him to make contradictory judgements? However I need not ask that question for now I come to think of it we have already agreed<sup>30</sup> that innumerable conflicts of this sort are constantly occurring in the mind. But there is a further point to be considered now. We have said<sup>31</sup> that a man of high character will bear any stroke of fortune such as the loss of a son or of anything else he holds dear with more equanimity than most people. We may now ask: will he feel no pain or is that impossible? Will he not rather observe due measure in his grief?

Yes: that is nearer the truth.

Now tell me: will he be more likely to struggle with his grief and resist it when he is under the eyes of his fellows or when he is alone?

He will be far more restrained in the presence of others.

Yes: when he is by himself he will not be ashamed to do and say much that he would not like anyone to see or hear.

Quite so.

What encourages him to resist his grief is the lawful authority of reason while the impulse to give way comes from the feeling itself and as we said the presence of contradictory impulses proves that two distinct elements in his nature must be involved. One of them is law-abiding: prepared to listen to the authority which declares that it is best to bear misfortune as quietly as possible without

<sup>28</sup> It should now be clear that this chapter is not concerned with aesthetic criticism but with extravagant claims for the poets as moral teachers. It may leave the impression that Plato has been irritated by some contemporary controversy and is overstating his case with a slightly malicious delight in paradox. At p. 341 he speaks of all this Part as a defence of his earlier exclusion of poetry.

<sup>29</sup> That ἡ τῆς ποιησεως μνημονη is here once more restricted to drama and the dramatic element in other poetry is clear from the definition of its content as the acts and fortunes of human beings (ἡδὲ τὸ ἵεναι means both to act and to fare well or ill).

<sup>30</sup> In the analysis of the conflict of motives at 439 c ff. p. 136.

<sup>31</sup> At 387 d p. 77.

resentment for several reasons it is never certain that misfortune may not be a blessing nothing is gained by chafing at it nothing human is matter for great concern and finally grief hinders us from calling in the help we most urgently need By this I mean reflection on what has happened letting reason decide on the best move in the game of life that the fall of the dice permits Instead of behaving like a child who goes on shrieking after a fall and hugging the wounded part, we should accustom the mind to set itself at once to raise up the fallen and cure the hurt banishing lamentation with a healing touch

Certainly that is the right way to deal with misfortune

And if as we think the part of us which is ready to act upon these reflections is the highest that other part which impels us to dwell upon our sufferings and can never have enough of grieving over them is unreasonable craven and faint hearted

Yes

Now this fretful temper gives scope for a great diversity of dramatic representation whereas the calm and wise character in its unvarying constancy is not easy to represent nor when represented is it readily understood especially by a promiscuous gathering in a theatre since it is foreign to their own habit of mind Obviously then this steadfast disposition does not naturally attract the dramatic poet and his skill is not designed to find favour with it If he is to have a popular success he must address himself to the fretful type with its rich variety of material for representation

Obviously

We have then a fair case against the poet and we may set him down as the counterpart of the painter whom he resembles in two ways his creations are poor things by the standard of truth and reality and his appeal is not to the highest part of the soul but to one which is equally inferior So we shall be justified in not admitting him into a well ordered commonwealth because he stimulates and strengthens an element which threatens to undermine the reason As a country may be given over into the power of its worst citizens while the better sort are ruined so we shall say the dramatic poet sets up a vicious form of government in the individual soul he gratifies that senseless part which can not distinguish great and small but regards the same things as now one, now the other and he is an image maker whose images are phantoms far removed from reality

Quite true

BUT I continued the heaviest count in our indictment is still to come Dramatic poetry has a most

formidable power of corrupting even men of high character with a few exceptions

Formidable indeed if it can do that

Let me put the case for you to judge When we listen to some hero in Homer or on the tragic stage moaning over his sorrows in a long tirade or to a chorus beating their breasts as they chant a lament you know how the best of us enjoy giving ourselves up to follow the performance with eager sympathy The more a poet can move our feelings in this way, the better we think him And yet when the sorrow is our own we pride ourselves on being able to bear it quietly like a man condemning the behaviour we admired in the theatre as womanish Can it be right that the spectacle of a man behaving as one would scorn and blush to behave oneself should be admired and enjoyed, instead of filling us with disgust?

No it really does not seem reasonable

It does not if you reflect that the poet ministers to the satisfaction of that very part of our nature whose instinctive hunger to have its fill of tears and lamentations is forcibly restrained in the case of our own misfortunes Meanwhile the noblest part of us insufficiently schooled by reason or habit has relaxed its watch over these querulous feelings with the excuse that the sufferings we are contemplating are not our own and it is no shame to us to admire and pity a man with some pretensions to a noble character though his grief may be excessive The enjoyment itself seems a clear gain which we cannot bring ourselves to forfeit by disdaining the whole poem Few I believe are capable of reflecting that to enter into another's feelings must have an effect on our own the emotions of pity and sympathy has strengthened will not be easy to restrain when we are suffering ourselves

That is very true

Does not the same principle apply to humour as well as to pathos? You are doing the same thing if in listening at a comic performance or in ordinary life to buffooneries which you would be ashamed to indulge in yourself you thoroughly enjoy them instead of being disgusted with their ribaldry There is in you an impulse to play the clown which you have held in restraint from a reasonable fear of being set down as a buffoon but now you have given it rein and by encouraging its impudence at the theatre you may be unconsciously carried away into playing the comedian in your private life Similar effects are produced by poetic representation of love and anger and all those desires and feelings of pleasure or pain which accompany our every action It waters the growth of passions which should be allowed to wither away and sets them up in control although the goodness and happiness of our lives depend on their being held in subjection

I cannot but agree with you

If so Glaucon, when you meet with admirers of Homer who tell you that he has been the educator of Hellas and that on questions of human conduct and culture he deserves to be constantly studied as a guide by whom to regulate your whole life it is well to give a friendly hearing to such people as entirely well meaning according to their lights, and you may acknowledge Homer to be the first and greatest of the tragic poets but you must be quite sure that we can admit into our commonwealth only the poetry which celebrates the praises of the gods and of good men If you go further and admit the honeyed muse in epic or in lyric verse then pleasure and pain will usurp the sovereignty of law and of the principles always recognized by common consent as the best

Quite true

So now since we have recurred to the subject of poetry let this be our defence it stands to reason that we could not but banish such an influence from our commonwealth But lest poetry should convict us of being harsh and unmannerly let us tell her further that there is a long-standing quarrel between poetry and philosophy There are countless tokens of this old antagonism, such as the lines which speak of the cur which at his master yelps or one mighty in the vain talk of fools or the throng of all too-sapient heads, or subtle thinkers all in rags <sup>32</sup> None the less, be it declared that if the dramatic poetry whose end is to give pleasure can show good reason why it should exist in a well-governed society we for our part should welcome it back being ourselves conscious of its charm only it would be a sin to betray what we believe to be the truth You too my friend must have felt this charm above all when poetry speaks through Homer's lips

I have indeed

It is fair then that before returning from exile poetry should publish her defence in lyric verse or some other measure, and I suppose we should allow her champions who love poetry but are not poets to plead for her in prose that she is no mere source of pleasure but a benefit to society and to human life We shall listen favourably, for we shall clearly be the gainers if that can be proved

Undoubtedly

But if it cannot then we must take a lesson from the lover who renounces at any cost a passion which he finds is doing him no good The love for poetry

<sup>32</sup> The source of these poetical attacks on philosophy is unknown The earliest philosophers to denounce Homer and Hesiod had been Xenophanes and Heraclitus about the beginning of the fifth century

of this kind, bred in us by our own much admired institutions will make us kindly disposed to believe in her genuine worth but so long as she cannot make good her defence we shall, as we listen, rehearse to ourselves the reasons we have just given as a counter charm to save us from relapsing into a passion which most people have never outgrown We shall reiterate that such poetry has no serious claim to be valued as an apprehension of truth One who lends an ear to it should rather beware of endangering the order established in his soul, and would do well to accept the view of poetry which we have expressed

I entirely agree

Yes, Glaucon, for much is at stake more than most people suppose it is a choice between becoming a good man or a bad and poetry no more than wealth or power or honours, should tempt us to be careless of justice and virtue

Your argument has convinced me as I think it would anyone else

## STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 What is Plato's theory of knowledge and what relationship does it bear to his theory of art?
- 2 Is the analogy between the artisan and the artist convincing?
- 3 What does Plato mean by art as an imitation? Does the artist deal only with the appearances of things?
- 4 Plato makes a distinction between the artist and the man of action to the detriment of the former Does this strike you as a valid distinction?
- 5 Is Plato's contention that the artist must be the master of each of the many fields of human activity he deals with a just one?
- 6 Has Plato limited the subjects of imitation too severely?
- 7 What does Plato mean by the reasonable man? What is his theory of the role of reason in life?
- 8 Is it necessarily true that the poet imitates only that which plants an evil constitution in the soul?
- 9 Is Plato right in stating that art produces only pleasure and pain instead of law and principle?
- 10 On what basis is Plato willing to admit art in the state? Is this a just demand? What would be the consequences to art under these circumstances?
- 11 What bearing do Plato's remarks have on contemporary political developments such as the rise of the strong state and their relationship to the production of art?
- 12 What arguments can be advanced against Plato's position on art?
- 13 What are the characteristics of Plato's style of expression and manner of argument? How do these contribute to his persuading us to his point of view?





## GREATNESS IN LITERATURE

## What Is a Classic?

*T S Eliot*

As a poet a critic and an editor T S Eliot holds a unique and almost magisterial position in the world of letters today. One of the founders of the modern movement in poetry, he is probably the best poet in English since Tennyson, and *The Wasteland* has attained the stature of a modern classic. His criticism has had a double effect: to lay the basis for a proper understanding and appreciation of modern poetry and to re-evaluate hitherto neglected aspects of the poetry of the past, notably that of metaphysical character. Thus both his poetry and his criticism have championed the new in literature, particularly the new technique of poetic expression, yet at the same time Eliot's beliefs have remained traditional and their sources are to be found in Anglicanism and classicism. He is therefore a mediator, a channel of communication between the old and the new, between the traditional and the experimental, between the conservative and the radical in poetry, in criticism and in matters of faith, and it is probably his ability to see and to express the *via media* between these opposites which gives his work such authority and influence. *What Is a Classic?* is an address given by Eliot to the Virgil Society of which he was the first president on October 16, 1944. In it Eliot's virtues as a critic are clearly revealed: sound scholarship which is yet not obtrusive, a formal style of expression but not academic, careful definition which is not pedantic, and an equal interest in language as such and in what language communicates. Most important, the problems of standards and values, both those of literature and of life, are never far absent from his consideration, so that one is inevitably reminded of Arnold, with whom he deserves comparison.

IN THE whole of European literature there is no poet who can furnish the texts for a more significant variety of discourse than Virgil. The fact that he symbolises so much in the history of Europe and represents such central European values is the justification for our founding a society to preserve his memory, the fact that he is so central and so comprehensive is my justification for this address. For if Virgil's poetry were a subject upon which only scholars should presume to speak, you would not have put me in this position or have cared to listen to what I have to say. I am emboldened by the reflection,

that no specialised knowledge or proficiency can confer the exclusive title to talk about Virgil. Speakers of the most diverse capacities can bring his poetry to bear upon matters within their competence, can hope to contribute from those studies to which they have given their minds to the elucidation of his value, can try to offer for the general use the benefit of whatever wisdom Virgil may have helped them to acquire in relation to their own experience of life. Each can give his testimony of Virgil in relation to those subjects which he knows best, or upon which he has most deeply reflected, that is what I meant by variety. In the end we may all be saying the same thing in different ways, and that is what I meant by significant variety.

The subject which I have taken is simply the question: What is a classic? It is not a new question. There is, for instance, a famous essay by Ste. Beuve with this title, whether it is a misfortune or not that—not having read it for some thirty odd years—accidents of the present time have prevented me from re-reading it before preparing this address. I hope to find out as soon as libraries are more accessible and books more plentiful. The pertinence of asking this question, with Virgil particularly in mind, is obvious: whatever the definition we arrive at, it cannot be one which excludes Virgil—we may say confidently that it must be one which will expressly reckon with him. But before I go farther, I should like to dispose of certain prejudices and anticipate certain misunderstandings. I do not aim to supersede, or to outlaw any use of the word classic which precedent has made permissible. The word has and will continue to have several meanings in several contexts. I am concerned with one meaning in one context. In defining the term in this way, I do not bind myself for the future, not to use the term in any of the other ways in which it has been used. If, for instance, you find me on some future occasion in writing, in public speech or in conversation using the word classic merely to mean a standard author in any language—using it merely as an indication of the greatness or of the permanence and importance of a writer in his own field, as when we speak of *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's* as a classic of schoolboy fiction or *Handley Cross* as a classic of the hunting field—you are not to expect an apology. And there is a very interesting book called *A Guide to the Classics* which tells you how to pick the Derby winner. On other occasions I permit myself to mean by the classics either Latin and Greek literature *in toto* or the greatest authors of those languages, as the context indicates. And, finally, I think that the account of the classic which I propose to give here should remove it from the area of the antithesis between classic and romantic—a pair of terms belonging to literary politics and therefore



arousing passions which I should wish, on this occasion Aeolus to contain in the bag

This leads me to my next point. According to the terms of the classic romantic controversy the rules of that game, to call any work of art classical implies either the highest praise or the most contemptuous abuse according to the party to which one belongs. It implies certain particular merits or faults either the perfection of form or the absolute of frigidity. But I want to define one kind of art and am not concerned that it is absolutely and in every respect *better* or *worse* than another kind. I shall enumerate certain qualities which I should expect the classic to display. But I do not say that if a literature is to be a great literature it must have any one author, or any one period in which all these qualities are manifested. If as I think they are all to be found in Virgil that is not to assert that he is the greatest poet who ever wrote—such an assertion about any poet seems to me meaningless—and it is certainly not to assert that Latin literature is greater than any other literature. We need not consider it as a defect of any literature if no one author or no one period is completely classical, or if as is true of English literature the period which most nearly fills the classical definition is not the greatest. I think that those literatures of which English is one of the most eminent in which the classical qualities are scattered between various authors and several periods may well be the richer. Every language has its own resources and its own limitations. The conditions of a language and the conditions of the history of the people who speak it may put out of question the expectation of a classical period or a classical author. That is not in itself any more a matter for regret than it is for gratulation. It did happen that the history of Rome was such the character of the Latin language was such that at a certain moment a uniquely classical poet was possible though we must remember that it needed that particular poet and a lifetime of labour on the part of that poet to make the classic out of his material. And of course Virgil couldn't know that *that* was what he was doing. He was if any poet ever was acutely aware of what he was trying to do the one thing he couldn't aim at or know that he was doing was to compose a classic for it is only by hindsight and in historical perspective that a classic can be known as such.

If there is one word on which we can fix which will suggest the maximum of what I mean by the term a classic it is the word *maturity*. I shall distinguish between the universal classic like Virgil and the classic which is only such in relation to the other literature in its own language or according to the view of life of a particular period. A classic can only occur when a civilisation is mature when a language and a literature are mature, and it must

be the work of a mature mind. It is the importance of that civilisation and of that language as well as the comprehensiveness of the mind of the individual poet which gives the universality. To define *maturity* without assuming that the hearer already knows what it means is almost impossible. Let us say then, that if we are properly mature, as well as educated persons we can recognise maturity in a civilisation and in a literature as we do in the other human beings whom we encounter. To make the meaning of maturity really apprehensible—indeed even to make it acceptable—to the immature is perhaps impossible. But if we are mature we either recognise maturity immediately or come to know it on more intimate acquaintance. No reader of Shakespeare for instance can fail to recognise increasingly as he himself grows up the gradual ripening of Shakespeare's mind even a less developed reader can perceive the rapid development of Elizabethan literature and drama as a whole from early Tudor crudity to the plays of Shakespeare and perceive a decline in the work of Shakespeare's successors. We can also observe upon a little conversance that the plays of Christopher Marlowe exhibit a greater maturity of mind and of style than the plays which Shakespeare wrote at the same age. It is interesting to speculate whether if Marlowe had lived as long as Shakespeare his development would have continued at the same pace. I doubt it for we observe some minds maturing earlier than others and we observe that those which mature very early do not always develop very far. I raise this point as a reminder, first that the value of maturity depends upon the value of that which matures and second that we should know when we are concerned with the maturity of individual writers and when with the relative maturity of literary periods. A writer who individually has a more mature mind may belong to a less mature period than another, so that in that respect his work will be less mature. The maturity of a literature is the reflection of that of the society in which it is produced. An individual author—notably Shakespeare and Virgil—can do much to develop his language but he cannot bring that language to maturity unless the work of his predecessors has prepared it for his final touch. A mature literature therefore has a history behind it a history that is not merely a chronicle an accumulation of manuscripts and writings of this kind and that but an ordered though unconscious progress of a language to realise its own potentialities within its own limitations.

It is to be observed that a society and a literature like an individual human being do not necessarily mature equally and concurrently in every respect. The precocious child is often in some obvious ways childish for his age in comparison with

ordinary children. Is there any one period of English literature to which we can point as being fully mature comprehensively and in equilibrium? I do not think so and as I shall repeat later I hope it is not so. We cannot say that any individual poet in English has in the course of his life become a more mature man than Shakespeare: we cannot even say that any poet has done so much to make the English language capable of expressing the most subtle thought or the most refined shades of feeling. Yet we cannot but feel that a play like Congreve's *Way of the World* is in some way more mature than any play of Shakespeare's but only in this respect that it reflects a more mature society—that is, it reflects a greater maturity of *manners*. The society for which Congreve wrote was from our point of view coarse and brutal enough yet it is nearer to ours than the society of the Tudors perhaps for that reason we judge it the more severely. Nevertheless it was a society more polished and less provincial its mind was shallower its sensibility more restricted it has lost some promise of maturity but realised another. So to maturity of *mind* we must add maturity of *manners*.

The progress towards maturity of language is I think more easily recognised and more readily acknowledged in the development of prose than in that of poetry. In considering prose we are less distracted by individual differences in greatness and more inclined to demand approximation towards a common standard, a common vocabulary and a common sentence structure: it is often in fact the prose which departs the farthest from these common standards which is individual to the extreme that we are apt to denominate poetic prose. At a time when England had already accomplished miracles in poetry her prose was relatively immature developed sufficiently for certain purposes but not for others at that same time when the French language had given little promise of poetry as great as that in English French prose was much more mature than English prose. You have only to compare any Tudor writer with Montaigne—and Montaigne himself as a stylist is only a precursor his style not ripe enough to fulfil the French requirements for the classic. Our prose was ready for some tasks before it could cope with others: a Malory could come long before a Hooker, a Hooker before a Hobbes, and a Hobbes before an Addison. Whatever difficulties we have in applying this standard to poetry it is possible to see that the development of a classic prose is the development towards a *common style*. By this I do not mean that the best writers are indistinguishable from each other. The essential and characteristic differences remain: it is not that the differences are less, but that they are more subtle and refined. To a sensitive palate the difference be-

tween the prose of Addison and that of Swift will be as marked as the difference between two vintage wines to a connoisseur. What we find, in a period of classic prose is not a mere common convention of writing, like the common style of newspaper leader writers but a community of taste. The age which precedes a classic age may exhibit both eccentricity and monotony: monotony because the resources of the language have not yet been explored and eccentricity because there is yet no generally accepted standard—if indeed, that can be called eccentric where there is no centre. Its writing may be at the same time pedantic and licentious. The age following a classic age may also exhibit eccentricity and monotony: monotony because the resources of the language have for the time at least been exhausted, and eccentricity because originality comes to be more valued than correctness. But the age in which we find a common style will be an age when society has achieved a moment of order and stability of equilibrium and harmony as the age which manifests the greatest extremes of individual style will be an age of development or an age of decay.

Maturity of language may naturally be expected to accompany maturity of mind and manners. We may expect the language to approach maturity at the moment when it has a critical sense of the past, a confidence in the present and no conscious doubt of the future. In literature this means that the poet is aware of his predecessors and that we are aware of the predecessors behind his work as we may be aware of ancestral traits in a person who is at the same time individual and unique. The predecessors should be themselves great and honoured but their accomplishment must be such as to suggest still undeveloped resources of the language and not such as to oppress the younger writers with the fact that everything that can be done has been done in their language. The poet certainly, in a mature age may still obtain stimulus from the hope of doing something that his predecessors have not done: he may even be in revolt against them as a promising adolescent may revolt against the beliefs, the habits and the manners of his parents but in retrospect we can see that he is also the continuer of their traditions that he preserves essential family characteristics and that his difference of behaviour is a difference in the circumstances of another age. And, on the other hand, just as we sometimes observe men whose lives are overshadowed by the fame of a father or grandfather men of whom any achievement of which they are capable appears comparatively insignificant so a late age of poetry may be consciously impotent to compete with its distinguished paternity. We meet poets of this kind at the end of any age: poets with a sense of the past only or alternatively poets whose hope of the future

is founded upon the attempt to renounce the past. The persistence of literary creativeness in any people, accordingly, consists in the maintenance of an unconscious balance between tradition in the larger sense—the collective personality so to speak realised in the literature of the past—and the originality of the living generation.

We cannot call the literature of the Elizabethan period great as it is, wholly mature: we cannot call it classical. No close parallel can be drawn between the development of Greek and Latin literature for Latin had Greek behind it; still less can we draw a parallel between these and any modern literature for modern literatures had both Latin and Greek behind them. In the Renaissance there is an early semblance of maturity, which is borrowed from antiquity. We are aware of approaching nearer to maturity with Milton. Milton was in a better position to have a critical sense of the past—of a past in English literature—than his great predecessors. To read Milton is to be confirmed in respect for the genius of Spenser and in gratitude to Spenser for having contributed towards making the verse of Milton possible. Yet the style of Milton is not a classic style: it is a style of a language still in formation, the style of a writer whose *masters* were not English but Latin and to a less degree Greek. This I think is only saying what Johnson and in turn Landor said when they complained of Milton's style not being quite English. Let us qualify this judgment by saying immediately that Milton did much to develop the language. One of the signs of approach towards a classic style is a development towards greater complexity of sentence and period structure. Such development is apparent in the single work of Shakespeare when we trace his style from the early to the late plays: we can even say that in his late plays he goes as far in the direction of complexity as is possible within the limits of dramatic verse which are narrower than those of other kinds. But complexity for its own sake is not a proper goal: its purpose must be first the precise expression of finer shades of feeling and thought, second the introduction of greater refinement and variety of music. When an author appears in his love of the elaborate structure, to have lost the ability to say anything simply when his addiction to pattern becomes such that he says things elaborately which should properly be said simply, and thus limits his range of expression, the process of complexity ceases to be quite healthy, and the writer is losing touch with the spoken language. Nevertheless, as verse develops, in the hands of one poet after another it tends from monotony to variety, from simplicity to complexity as it declines, it tends towards monotony again though it may perpetuate the formal structure to which genius gave life and meaning. You will judge

for yourselves how far this generalisation is applicable to the predecessors and followers of Virgil: we can all see this secondary monotony in the eighteenth century imitators of Milton—who himself is never monotonous. There comes a time when a new simplicity even a relative crudity may be the only alternative.

You will have anticipated the conclusion towards which I have been approaching: that those qualities of the classic which I have so far mentioned—maturity of mind, maturity of manners, maturity of language and perfection of the common style—are most nearly to be illustrated in English literature in the eighteenth century and in poetry most in the poetry of Pope. If that were all I had to say on the matter it would certainly not be new, and it would not be worth saying. That would be merely proposing a choice between two errors at which men have arrived before: one that the eighteenth century is (as it thought itself) the finest period of English literature and the other that the classical idea should be wholly discredited. My own opinion is that we have no classic age and no classic poet in English: that when we see why this is so we have not the slightest reason for regret but that nevertheless we must maintain the classic ideal before our eyes. Because we must maintain it and because the English genius of language has had other things to do than to realise it we cannot afford either to reject or to overrate the age of Pope: we cannot see English literature as a whole or aim rightly in the future without a critical appreciation of the degree to which the classical qualities are exemplified in the work of Pope which means that unless we are able to enjoy the work of Pope we cannot arrive at a full understanding of English poetry.

It is fairly obvious that the realisation of classical qualities by Pope was obtained at a high price—to the exclusion of some greater potentialities of English verse. Now to some extent the sacrifice of some potentialities in order to realise others is a condition of artistic creation as it is a condition of life in general. In life the man who refuses to sacrifice anything to gain anything else ends in mediocrity or failure though on the other hand there is the specialist who has sacrificed too much for too little or who has been born too completely the specialist to have had anything to sacrifice. But in the English eighteenth century we have reason for feeling that too much was excluded. There was the mature mind but it was a narrow one. English society and English letters were not provincial in the sense that they were not isolated from and not lingering behind the best European society and letters. Yet the age itself was in a manner of speaking a provincial age. When one thinks of a Shakespeare a Jeremy Taylor a Milton in England—of a Racine a

Molière and Pascal in France—in the seventeenth century, one is inclined to say that the eighteenth century had perfected its formal garden only by restricting the area under cultivation. We feel that if the classic is really a worthy ideal it must be capable of exhibiting an amplitude, a catholicity to which the eighteenth century cannot lay claim. Qualities which are present in some great authors like Chaucer, who cannot be regarded in my sense as classics of English literature and which are fully present in the mediaeval mind of Dante. For in the *Divine Comedy* if anywhere we find the classic in a modern European language. In the eighteenth century we are oppressed by the limited range of sensibility and especially in the scale of religious feeling. It is not that in England at least the poetry is not Christian. It is not even that the poets were not devout Christians: for a pattern of orthodoxy of principle and sincere piety of feeling you may look long before you find a poet more genuine than Samuel Johnson. Yet there are evidences of a deeper religious sensibility in the poetry of Shakespeare whose belief and practice can be only a matter of conjecture. And this restriction of religious sensibility itself produces a kind of provinciality (though we must add that in this sense the nineteenth century was more provincial still) the provinciality which indicates the disintegration of Christendom: the decay of a common belief and a common culture. It would seem then, that the eighteenth century in spite of its classical achievement—an achievement I believe which still has great importance as an example for the future—was lacking some condition which makes the creation of a true classic possible. What this condition is we must return to Virgil to discover.

I should like first to rehearse the characteristics which I have already attributed to the classic, with special application to Virgil: to his language, his civilisation and the particular moment in the history of that language and civilisation at which he arrived. Maturity of mind, this needs history and the consciousness of history. Consciousness of history can not be fully awake except where there is other history than the history of the poet's own people: we need this in order to see our own place in history. There must be the knowledge of the history of at least one other highly civilised people and of a people whose civilisation is sufficiently cognate to have influenced and entered into our own. This is a consciousness which the Romans had and which the Greeks, however much more highly we may estimate their achievement—and indeed we may respect it all the more on this account—could not possess. It was a consciousness certainly which Virgil himself did much to develop. From the beginning Virgil like his contemporaries and immediate predecessors,

was constantly adapting and using the discoveries, traditions and inventions of Greek poetry to make use of a foreign literature in this way marks a further stage of civilisation beyond making use only of the earlier stages of one's own—though I think we can say that no poet has ever shown a finer sense of proportion than Virgil in the uses he made of Greek and of earlier Latin poetry. It is this development of one literature or one civilisation in relation to another which gives a peculiar significance to the subject of Virgil's epic. In Homer the conflict between the Greeks and the Trojans is hardly larger in scope than a feud between one Greek city-state and a coalition of other city-states. Behind the story of Aeneas is the consciousness of a more radical distinction, a distinction which is at the same time a statement of *relatedness* between two great cultures and finally of their reconciliation under an all embracing destiny.

Virgil's maturity of mind and the maturity of his age are exhibited in this awareness of history. With maturity of mind I have associated maturity of manners and absence of provinciality. I suppose that to a modern European suddenly precipitated into the past the social behaviour of the Romans and the Athenians would seem indifferently coarse but barbarous and offensive. But if the poet can portray something superior to contemporary practice it is not in the way of anticipating some later and quite different code of behaviour but by an insight into what the conduct of his own people at his own time might be at its best. House parties of the wealthy in Edwardian England were not exactly what we read of in the pages of Henry James but Mr James's society was an idealisation of a kind of *that* society and not an anticipation of any other. I think that we are conscious in Virgil more than in any other Latin poet—for Catullus and Propertius seem ruffians and Horace somewhat plebeian by comparison—of a refinement of manners springing from a delicate sensibility and particularly in that test of manners private and public conduct between the sexes. It is not for me in a gathering of people all of whom may be better scholars than I to review the story of Aeneas and Dido. But I have always thought the meeting of Aeneas with the shade of Dido in Book VI not only one of the most poignant but one of the most civilised passages in poetry. It is complex in meaning and economical in expression for it not only tells us about the attitude of Dido—what is still more important is what it tells us about the attitude of Aeneas. Dido's behaviour appears almost as a projection of Aeneas' own conscience: this we feel is the way in which Aeneas' conscience would *expect* Dido to behave to him. The point it seems to me is not that Dido is unforgiving—though it is important that instead of railing at him

she merely snubs him—perhaps the most telling snub in all poetry what matters most is that Aeneas does not forgive himself—and this significantly in spite of the fact of which he is well aware that all that he has done has been in compliance with destiny or in consequence of the machinations of gods who are themselves, we feel only instruments of a greater inscrutable power Here what I chose as an instance of civilised manners proceeds to testify to civilised consciousness and conscience but all of the levels at which we may consider a particular episode belong to one whole It will be observed finally that the behaviour of Virgil's characters (I might except Turnus the man without a destiny) never appears to be according to some purely local or tribal code of manners it is in its time both Roman and European Virgil certainly on the plane of manners is not provincial

To attempt to demonstrate the maturity of language and style of Virgil is for the present occasion a superfluous task many of you could perform it better than I and I think that we should all be in accord But it is worth repeating that Virgil's style would not have been possible without a literature behind him and without his having a very intimate knowledge of this literature so that he was, in a sense, re writing Latin poetry—as when he borrows a phrase or a device from a predecessor and improves upon it He was a learned author, all of whose learning was relevant to his task and he had for his use, just enough literature behind him and not too much As for maturity of style I do not think that any poet has ever developed a greater command of the complex structure both of sense and sound, without losing the resource of direct brief and startling simplicity when the occasion required it On this I need not dilate but I think it is worth while to say a word more about the *common style* because this is something which we cannot perfectly illustrate from English poetry and we are therefore apt to pay not enough deference to it In modern European literature the closest approximation to the ideal of a common style, is probably to be found in Dante and in Racine the nearest we have to it in English poetry is Pope and Pope's is a common style which in comparison is of a very narrow range A common style is one which makes us exclaim not this is a man of genius using the language but this realises the genius of the language We do not say this when we read Pope, because we are too conscious of all the resources of the English speech upon which Pope does not draw we can at most say this realises the genius of the English language of a particular epoch We do not say this when we read Shakespeare or Milton because we are always conscious of the greatness of the man, and of the miracles that *he* is

performing with the language we come nearer perhaps with Chaucer—but that Chaucer is using a different from our point of view a cruder speech And Shakespeare and Milton as later history shows left open many possibilities of other uses of English in poetry whereas after Virgil it is truer to say that no great development was possible, until the Latin language became something different

At this point I should like to return to a question which I have already suggested the question whether the achievement of a classic in the sense in which I have been using the term throughout is for the people and the language of its origin altogether an unmixed blessing—even though it is unquestionably a ground for pride To have this question raised in one's mind it is almost enough simply to have contemplated Latin poetry after Virgil to have considered the extent to which later poets lived and worked under the shadow of his greatness so that we praise or dispraise them according to standards which he set—admiring them sometimes for discovering some variation which was new or even for merely rearranging patterns of words so as to give a pleasing faint reminder of the remote original We may raise a rather different question when we view Italian poetry after Dante for the later Italian poets did not imitate Dante, and had this advantage that they lived in a world which was more rapidly changing so that there was obviously something different for them to do they provoke no direct disastrous comparison But English poetry and French poetry also may be considered fortunate in this that the greatest poets have exhausted only particular areas We cannot say that since the age of Shakespeare and respectively since the time of Racine there has been any really first-rate poetic drama in England or in France, since Milton we have had no great epic poem, though there have been great long poems It is true that every supreme poet classic or not tends to exhaust the ground he cultivates so that it must, after yielding a diminishing crop finally be left in fallow for some generations

Here you may object that the effect on a literature which I am imputing to the classic results not from the classic character of that work but simply from its greatness for I have denied to Shakespeare and to Milton the title of classics in the sense in which I am employing the term throughout and yet have admitted that no supremely great poetry of the same kind has been written since You may or may not be disposed to accept the distinction which I shall make That every great work of poetry tends to make impossible the production of equally great works of the same kind is indisputable The reason may be stated partly in terms of conscious purpose no first rate poet would attempt to do again, what

has already been done as well as it can be done in his language. It is only after the language—its cadence, still more than vocabulary and syntax—has with time and social change sufficiently altered, that another dramatic poet as great as Shakespeare or another epic poet as great as Milton can become possible. Not only every great poet but every genuine, though lesser poet fulfils once for all some possibility of the language and so leaves one possibility less for his successors. The vein that he has exhausted may be a very small one or may represent some major form of poetry, the epic or dramatic. But what the great poet has exhausted is merely one form and not the whole language. The classic poet, on the other hand, exhausts not a form only but the language of his time, and when he is a wholly classic poet the language of his time will be the language in its perfection. So that it is not the poet alone of whom we have to take account but the language in which he writes: it is not merely that a classic poet exhausts the language but that an exhaustible language is the kind which may produce a classic poet.

We may be inclined to ask then whether we are not fortunate in possessing a language which instead of having produced a classic can boast a rich variety in the past and the possibility of further novelty in the future? Now while we are *inside* a literature while we speak the same language and have fundamentally the same culture as that which produced the literature of the past we want to maintain two things: a pride in what our literature has already accomplished and a belief in what it may still accomplish in the future. If we cease to believe in the future the past would cease to be fully *our* past: it would become the past of a dead civilisation. And this consideration must operate with particular cogency upon the minds of those who are engaged in the attempt to add to the store of English literature. There is no classic in English: therefore any living poet can say there is still hope that I—and those after me, for no one can face with equanimity once he understands what is implied the thought of being the *last* poet—may be able to write something which will be worth preserving. But from the aspect of eternity, such interest in the future has no meaning: when two languages are both dead languages we cannot say that one is greater because of the number and variety of its poets or the other because its genius is more completely expressed in the work of one poet. What I wish to affirm at one and the same time is this: that because English is a living language and the language in which we live we may be glad that it has never completely realised itself in the work of one classic poet but that on the other hand, the classic criterion is of vital importance to us. We need

it in order to judge our individual poets though we refuse to judge our literature as a whole in comparison with one which has produced a classic. Whether a literature does culminate in a classic, is a matter of fortune. It is largely, I suspect, a question of the degree of fusion of the elements within that language so that the Latin languages can approximate more closely to the classic not simply because they are Latin but because they are more homogeneous than English and therefore tend more naturally towards the *common style* whereas English being the most various of great languages in its constituents tends to variety rather than perfection: needs the longest time to realise its potency and still contains perhaps more unexplored possibilities. It has, perhaps, the greatest capacity for changing and yet remaining itself.

I am now approaching the distinction between the relative and the absolute classic: the distinction between the literature which can be called classic in relation to its own language and that which is classic in relation to a number of other languages. But first I wish to record one more characteristic of the classic beyond those I have enumerated which will help to establish this distinction and to mark the difference between such a classic as Pope and such a classic as Virgil. It is convenient to recapitulate certain assertions which I made earlier.

I suggested at the beginning that a frequent if not universal feature of the maturing of individuals may be a process of selection (not altogether conscious), of the development of some potentialities to the exclusion of others and that a similarity may be found in the development of language and literature. If this is so we should expect to find that in a minor classic literature such as our own of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth century the elements excluded, to arrive at maturity will be more numerous or more serious and that satisfaction in the result will always be qualified by our awareness of the possibilities of the language revealed in the work of earlier authors which have been ignored. The classic age of English literature is not representative of the total genius of the race as I have intimated: we cannot say that that genius is wholly realised in any one period—with the result that we can still by referring to one or another period of the past, envisage possibilities for the future. The English language is one which offers wide scope for legitimate divergences of style: it seems to be such that no one age and certainly no one writer, can establish a norm. The French language has seemed to be much more closely tethered to a normal style yet even in French though the language appeared to have established itself, once for all, in the seventeenth century there is an *esprit gaulois*, an element of richness present in Rabelais and



in Villon, the awareness of which may qualify our judgement of the *wholeness* of Racine or Molière for we may feel that it is not only unrepresented but unreconciled. We may come to the conclusion then that the perfect classic must be one in which the whole genius of a people will be latent, if not all revealed and that it can only appear in a language such that its whole genius can be present at once. We must accordingly add to our list of characteristics of the classic that of *comprehensiveness*. The classic must within its formal limitations, express the maximum possible of the whole range of feeling which represents the character of the people who speak that language. It will represent this at its best, and it will also have the widest appeal among the people to which it belongs: it will find its response among all classes and conditions of men.

When a work of literature has beyond this comprehensiveness in relation to its own language an equal significance in relation to a number of foreign literatures we may say that it has also *universality*. We may for instance speak justly enough of the poetry of Goethe as constituting a classic because of the place which it occupies in its own language and literature. Yet because of its partiality of the impermanence of some of its content and the germanism of the sensibility, because Goethe appears to a foreign eye limited by his age by his language and by his culture so that he is unrepresentative of the whole European tradition and like our own nineteenth century authors a little provincial we cannot call him a *universal* classic. He is a universal author in the sense that he is an author with whose works every European ought to be acquainted but that is a different thing. Nor on one count or another can we expect to find the proximate approach to the classic in *any* modern language. It is necessary to go to the two dead languages: it is important that they are dead because through their death we have come into our inheritance—the fact that they are dead would in itself give them no value apart from the fact that all the peoples of Europe are their beneficiaries. And of all the great poets of Greece and Rome I think that it is to Virgil that we owe the most for our standard of the classic which I will repeat, is not the same thing as pretending that he is the greatest or the one to whom we are in every way the most indebted—it is of a particular debt that I speak. His comprehensiveness his peculiar kind of comprehensiveness is due to the unique position in our history of the Roman Empire and the Latin language a position which may be said to conform to its *destiny*. This sense of destiny comes to consciousness in the *Aeneid*. Aeneas is himself from first to last a man in fate a man who is neither an adventurer nor a schemer neither a vagabond nor a careerist, a man fulfilling his destiny,

not under compulsion or arbitrary decree and certainly from no stimulus to glory but by surrendering his will to a higher power behind the gods who would thwart or direct him. He would have preferred to stop in Troy but he becomes an exile and something greater and more significant than any exile: he is exiled for a purpose greater than he can know but which he recognises, and he is not, in a human sense a happy or successful man. But he is the symbol of Rome and as Aeneas is to Rome so is ancient Rome to Europe. Thus Virgil acquires the centrality of the unique classic: he is at the centre of European civilisation in a position which no other poet can share or usurp. The Roman Empire and the Latin language were not any empire and any language but an empire and a language with a unique destiny in relation to ourselves and the poet in whom that Empire and that language came to consciousness and expression is a poet of unique destiny.

If Virgil is thus the consciousness of Rome and the supreme voice of her language he must have a significance for us which cannot be expressed wholly in terms of literary appreciation and criticism. Yet adhering to the problems of literature or to the terms of literature in dealing with life we may be allowed to imply more than we state. The value of Virgil to us in literary terms is in providing us with a critical criterion. We may as I have said have reasons to rejoice that this criterion is provided by a poet writing in a different language from our own but that is not a reason for rejecting the criterion. To preserve the classical standard and to measure every individual work of literature by it, is to see that while our literature as a whole may contain everything every single work in it may be defective in something. This may be a necessary defect a defect without which some quality present would be lacking but we must see it as a defect at the same time that we see it as a necessity. In the absence of this standard of which I speak a standard we cannot keep clearly before us if we rely on our own literature alone, we tend first to admire works of genius for the wrong reasons—as we extol Blake for his *philosophy* and Hopkins for his *style* and from this we proceed to greater error to giving the second rate equal rank with the first-rate. In short without the constant application of the classical measure which we owe to Virgil more than to any other one poet we tend to become provincial.

By provincial I mean here something more than I find in the dictionary definitions. I mean more for instance than wanting the culture or polish of the capital though, certainly Virgil was of the Capital to a degree which makes any later poet of equal stature look a little provincial, and I mean

more than narrow in thought in culture in creed—a slippery definition this for, from a modern liberal point of view Dante was narrow in thought in culture in creed, yet it may be the Broad Church man rather than the Narrow Churchman who is the more provincial. I mean also a distortion of values the exclusion of some the exaggeration of others which springs not from lack of wide geographical perambulation, but from applying standards acquired within a limited area to the whole of human experience, which confounds the contingent with the essential, the ephemeral with the permanent. In our age when men seem more than ever prone to confuse wisdom with knowledge and knowledge with information and to try to solve problems of life, in terms of engineering there is coming into existence a new kind of provincialism which perhaps deserves a new name. It is a provincialism not of space but of time one for which history is merely the chronicle of human devices which have served their turn and been scrapped one for which the world is the property solely of the living, a property in which the dead hold no shares. The menace of this kind of provincialism is that we can all all the peoples on the globe, be provincials together and those who are not content to be provincials can only become hermits. If this kind of provincialism led to greater tolerance in the sense of forbearance, there might be more to be said for it but it seems more likely to lead to our becoming indifferent, in matters where we ought to maintain a distinctive dogma or standard and to our becoming intolerant in matters which might be left to local or personal preference. We may have as many varieties of religion as we like provided we all send our children to the same schools. But my concern here is only with the corrective to provincialism in literature. We need to remind ourselves that, as Europe is a whole (and still in its progressive mutilation and disfigurement, the organism out of which any greater world harmony must develop) so European literature is a whole the several members of which cannot flourish if the same blood stream does not circulate throughout the whole body. The blood stream of European literature is Latin and Greek—not as two systems of circulation but one, for it is through Rome that our parentage in Greece must be traced. What common measure of excellence have we in literature among our several languages which is not the classical measure? What mutual intelligibility can we hope to preserve, except in our common heritage of thought and feeling in those two languages for the understanding of which, no European people is in any position of advantage over any other? No modern language could aspire to the universality of Latin even though it came to be spoken by millions more than ever spoke

Latin and even though it came to be the universal means of communication between peoples of all tongues and cultures. No modern language can hope to produce a classic in the sense in which I have called Virgil a classic. Our classic the classic of all Europe is Virgil.

In our several literatures we have much wealth of which to boast, to which Latin has nothing to compare but each literature has its greatness not in isolation but because of its place in a larger pattern set in Rome. I have spoken of the new seriousness—*gravity* I might say—the new insight into history illustrated by the dedication of Aeneas to Rome to a future far beyond his living achievement. His reward was hardly more than a narrow beachhead and a political marriage in a weary middle age his youth interred its shadow moving with the shades the other side of Cumae. And so I said one envisages the destiny of ancient Rome. So we may think of Roman literature at first sight a literature of limited scope with a poor muster of great names, yet universal as no other literature can be a literature unconsciously sacrificing in compliance to its destiny in Europe the opulence and variety of later tongues to produce for us the classic. It is sufficient that this standard should have been established once for all the task does not have to be done again. But the maintenance of the standard is the price of our freedom the defence of freedom against chaos. We may remind ourselves of this obligation by our annual observance of piety towards the great ghost who guided Dante's pilgrimage who, as it was his function to lead Dante towards a vision he could never himself enjoy led Europe towards the Christian culture which he could never know and who, speaking for the last time in the new Italian speech, said in farewell

il temporal foco e l'eterno  
veduto hai figlio e sei venuto in parte  
dov'io per me più oltre non discerno  
Son the temporal fire and the eternal hast  
thou seen and art come to a place where I,  
of myself, discern no further

## STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 What does Eliot mean by the statement that 'Every language has its own resources and its own limitations'?
- 2 How is the word *maturity* used in this essay? Is it used in an exclusively literary sense? What other conditions for the production of literature beside language does the word imply?
- 3 Do you agree with the idea that the age with the common style will be one of order while the age with many individual styles will be one of development or decay? What examples can you advance to argue this point one way or the other? What light does this statement throw on the poetry of the present?



4 Eighteenth century poetry is in our time not too highly regarded yet note how Eliot defends it and on what grounds What do you think of this approach? Is it applicable to other neglected periods of literature?

5 What does Mr Eliot mean by provinciality? How is this contrasted to maturity?

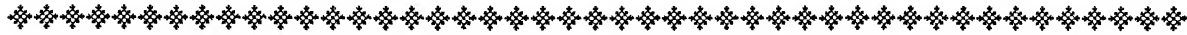
6 What are the characteristics of Virgil's virtues as a poet? Can these standards be applied to other poets? Are they the only standards are they the best standards which can be applied to the judgment of a poet?

7 What does Eliot mean by comprehensiveness and universality?

8 Note Eliot's attack on contemporary provincialism the provincialism of engineering What are his reasons for making this criticism? Do they seem to you sound ones? What reply can you make to Eliot's point of view?

9 Do you agree with Eliot's conclusion as to the relationship between the standard of value and freedom?

10 What insights into literature and into the history of literature has this essay given you? What are the controlling assumptions behind the thought of the essay? Is Eliot closer to the position taken by Plato than that represented by Gulliver's Travels or neither? How would you define Eliot's critical position?



## THE WRITER AT WORK

FROM *Poets at Work*

### “The Meaning of the Discarded Poem”

Karl Shapiro

One of the most noteworthy developments in the history of criticism has been the very recent shift in interest from criticism as judgment to criticism as the analysis of the process of poetic creation. One reason for this shift has been the disillusioning realization that the history of criticism has revealed such disparities of judgment (you will find some in this book) such changes in the places accorded writers such reversals of opinion and judgment that the conclusion has been reached that no judgment can or ought to be final. Another reason has been the new body of information about the operations of the mind just now being made available by modern psychology which the critic is finding increasingly illuminating for the study of literature with the result that he can now devote his attention not so much to the finished work of art as he has in the past but rather to the processes by which the poem came into being. As a consequence the published book is to the new critic of less significance than the poet's worksheets and revisions in which the career of the poem can be studied from its genesis through its corrections and changes to its final printed form. The critic's concern is therefore not with judgment but with understanding; by the use of the worksheets and corrections he is able to place himself inside the mind of the poet as it were and to see with the poet's eyes he himself goes through the process of creation and criticism becomes an act of re-creation

from within outwards. Such study demands great awareness and sympathy the ability to recognize the significance of details the understanding of the problems which confront the poet *qua* poet the poet's use of language then is of greater importance than his ideas so that the question of judgment is made irrelevant or at least secondary to the analysis of the making of the poem itself. The University of Buffalo has become the most important repository for the worksheets and notebooks of modern poets and in *Poets at Work* four studies of several modern poets' workbooks from the collection hitherto unavailable in printed form are presented. One of these by Karl Shapiro himself a poet, is reprinted here.

*Any reaction to stimulus may be causally explained but the creative act which is the absolute antithesis of mere reaction will for ever elude the human understanding.<sup>1</sup>*

TO C G JUNG we are indebted for what must be one of the most discouraging statements concerning the creative activity ever written. I use it as the epigraph to this paper as a suggested motto for the student of manuscripts. If we must enter this ground let us first abandon hope of making a discovery. Nevertheless I do not feel that the mystery can be shut up so concisely and finally as the psychologist asserts and at any rate as long as there is poetry there will be curiosity about its genesis. Consider how much more is known today about the behavior of the mind than was known a century ago. Dreams at least by the initiated, are no longer considered nonsense may not poems yet be found to express some undiscovered language of the spirit? The cu-

<sup>1</sup> C G Jung *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* Harcourt Brace p 177

rent unpopularity of the Freudian contribution to this end is perhaps a symptom of resistance to such a true discovery. We are told by the objectors that if art is a symptom of mental sickness then both its validity as art and its morality must suffer in the eyes of a healthy world. It is also suggested that Freud was a victim of a nineteenth century delusion that the creative function implies a disability in the creator. Let us look at this argument briefly.

The disability theory, or what I would call the clubfoot theory of art, has by no means been established. Of course it would be priggish and absurd for the poet to coddle a monster of the mind or to live up to a deformity of the body although it is common knowledge that these defects are often the mark of the artist. To say they do not exist is to conceal perfectly good evidence. Some effort must still be made to solve the question of sickness and creativity.

We must first understand that by sick we really mean only different or what the clinician would call abnormal. What is abnormal is thought to be beyond the needs of nature or in excess of nature. The sick man finds it necessary to concentrate on some activity in his body or his mind that obliterates all other activities. But sick also implies an injury to some part of the body or mind. A child who is in pain because it is cutting a tooth is not said to be sick as is an adult with an abscessed tooth, the difference being that in one case the pain will be beneficial and in the other malignant. Few people contend that poetry is anything but beneficent but many believe that the symptoms of creation are abnormal, diseased and dangerous. I am not as interested in the outcome of this question as I am in another: whether the artist is more different (sicker) than, say a philosopher, a scientist or a man of business. I believe he is for this reason. It is the nature of the creative mind to familiarize itself with depths of memory, desire, sensation and all the remote quadrants of its being that the speculative or the commercial mind has no need of and indeed shuns for its own safety. It is certainly true that a great deal—perhaps most—poetry also shuns these subterranean places and that at a certain level of creativity a poet can compose without seriously ruffling the composure of his spirit. But it is the activity below this level that is most apt to tell us something about itself.

Let us agree, then, that the poet is different from the non poet in that he makes greater demands on his own. Unknown than anyone else and that he brings to light certain riches which are accorded a universal value. Rimbaud stole his diamonds but where? asks Cocteau. That is the puzzle.

Anyone who attempts literary criticism must sooner or later come to the point at which he is

forced to use terms that designate levels of inspiration, sources of material, kinds of inventiveness and so on. In general no effort is made to define these terms but the reader knows by the context and from his own experience what is implied. We are accustomed to find such language as the following in the most scrupulous criticism. It is only when the ideas become more automatic, come more freely and are less manipulated that we begin to suspect their origin to suspect that they spring from a shallower source.<sup>2</sup> The words *ideas manipulated*, *origin shallower source* certainly indicate a theory of composition which we do not know and do not need to know. This is because it is our theory or what everyone interested in writing thinks is the way writing happens.

The critic's recognition of various levels of creativity points to the existence of a scale or ladder of poetic methods. Just as the expression a shallower source indicates other deeper sources so are we ultimately led to believe that there is a top and a bottom to the poetic psyche and that if one had insight enough he could define the functions of the poem making activity at any level of the scale. It is always interesting to see how these levels are labeled and what functions the investigator attributes to them. Nietzsche for instance spoke of the Apollonian or static principle of art in distinction to the Dionysian or dynamic principle and made the latter stand for the nobler and more life producing strain.<sup>3</sup> Shelley speaks of the principle of analysis and the principle of synthesis the first referring to the reason and the second to the imagination. Poetry is a thing of the imagination although even at its most glorious a poem is probably only a pale reflection of the original conception of the poet.<sup>4</sup> Heibert Read uses the terms *organic* and *abstract* to denote a similar correspondence between the truly inventive act and that which represents a fixation of a particular form.<sup>5</sup> Jung discovers a dichotomy in the process of artistic creation which he calls the psychological and the visionary modes. The former deals with always intelligible, always familiar material; the resultant art does not disturb the chartered currents of the society that sees its birth. Such works indeed, do not transcend the conscious life of man at all and it is works of this category that account for the bulk of all literature, music and art. The visionary mode of creation reverses these conditions of composition completely. It is a 'primordial experience from which it derives its power, an experience foreign and cold, many sided, demonic and grotesque. The whole process involves a mystic

<sup>2</sup> T. S. Eliot *Selected Essays* Harcourt Brace p. 277

<sup>3</sup> F. W. Nietzsche *The Birth of Tragedy*

<sup>4</sup> P. B. Shelley *Defence of Poetry*

<sup>5</sup> Heibert Read *Form in Modern Poetry* Sheed and Waid

participation in the collective unconscious<sup>6</sup>—and it is there that Jung lets the matter rest

I would like to mention one more instance of this dualism that crops up when the critic speaks of the origins of poetry this one the most interesting because despite its great age it is the fullest expression of the idea of the double principle of creativity I know of Speaking of the poet who has no touch of the Muse's madness in his soul Socrates says The sane man disappears and is nowhere when he enters into rivalry with the madman Madness here is meant as insanity not as a figurative expression for the creative excitement What is important in this passage from the *Phaedrus* is that the philosopher makes a distinction between prophecy and madness including both as aspects of the poetic activity For the time being we can use these designations of Plato as the most inclusive we have *Mantic* or prophetic poetry can stand for the cool scientific method of creation which relies on fixed rules signs and traditions to produce its art *manic* or insane poetry would be that uttered under supernatural suggestion like the oracles of the Pythoness One might extend these definitions to include mystical poetry as the highest form of the mantic art—that which makes a direct contact with a deity We would then have a closed circle the complete circuit as it were of the entire poetic process Socrates takes pains to point out that the ancients had only the one word to define both prophecy and madness

These definitions of course would not tell us what happens to the poem after the initial inspiration is given and as we shall see in a moment the poetic material given under supernatural or sub natural suggestion can scarcely be termed poetry until it has been worked upon by the poet

I think it would be of value to purely scientific inquiry if poets would now and then try to describe what they felt about the levels of inspiration and the terrain of the poetic psyche A remarkable letter written by Schiller to a friend who complained of his lack of creative power is quoted by Freud as an example of insight into freely rising ideas It is encouraging to come upon an observation as keen as this

The reason for your complaint lies it seems to me in the constraint which your intellect imposes upon your imagination Apparently it is not good—and indeed it hinders the creative work of the mind—if the intellect examines too closely the ideas already pouring in as it were at the gates Regarded in isolation an idea may be quite insignificant and venturesome in the extreme but it may acquire importance from an idea which follows it perhaps in a certain collocation with other ideas which may seem equally absurd it may be capable

of furnishing a very serviceable link The intellect cannot judge all these ideas unless it can retain them until it has considered them in connection with these other ideas In the case of a creative mind the intellect has withdrawn its watchers from the gates and the ideas rush in pell mell and only then does it review and inspect the multitude You worthy critics are ashamed or afraid of the momentary and passing madness which is found in all real creators <sup>7</sup>

Once again the dualism of the intellect and the imagination is posed with the characteristic emphasis on madness as the helpmate of poetry

I would like to give my own impression of the poetic psyche and try to apply this picture to a study of the manuscripts of certain contemporary poets My impression is based in part on those of the foregoing critics and on my own experience

The poetic psyche I compare with a tree To the roots belong the demonic principle or that which cannot see but works belowstans searching out and down in all directions for anchorage and food It is probably the first part of the psyche to appear The trunk and limbs I would identify with the meta physical principle this stands in and out of the earth at the same time and is simultaneously interested in being and knowing The leaves by far the most populous equipment of the tree I would identify with the literary principle only the leaves are millionfold they flourish manufacture food and die some to enrich the earth most to become dust Last the mystical principle which I would place in the flower fruit and seed of the tree

This description despite its obvious faults also suggests the biological cycle When the tree has done its work our attention is turned to the ground poetry reproduces itself on the broadest scale by flowering bearing and then running to seed In periods of revolt we are always back to first principles Now it should not be concluded because of location alone that the demonic principle is inferior to the mystical principle or that one extreme stands for evil and the other for good The most we can say about the two extremes of the poetic psyche is that in the demonic principle the poetic material arrives whereas in the mystical principle it is arrived at The one begins in frenzy the other achieves frenzy And about the relative greatness of these four principles I think it would be unsafe to say anything more than that the greatest poets use several or all four of the principles in turn or together Jung in keeping with his definition of the visionary art cites three works as among the highest examples *The Divine Comedy* the second part of Goethe's *Faust* and *The Shepherd of Hermas*<sup>8</sup> \* The first two I

<sup>7</sup> S Freud The Method of Dream Interpretation *Basic Writings of Freud* Modern Library

<sup>8</sup> C G Jung *op cit* \* Jung however is speaking of vision and not of poetry

<sup>6</sup> C G Jung *op cit*

would place among the foremost poems, that is those that duplicate the life cycle of the tree but the third which is a work of literature only by assumption I would not include at all. Plato's differentiation of prophetic from poetic madness is useful here. I cannot believe that apocalyptic literature is poetry, if poetry is to have any meaning of its own. This is not a quibble. *The Shepherd of Hermas* is part of the primitive Christian literature almost included in the final *New Testament*. As such it is free of the strictures of literary aims.

The question now rises: when do we know who is a true demonic or mystical poet and who is not? What is the difference, say, between the mysticism of Gerard Manley Hopkins and that of Augustus Montague Toplady? Or what is the difference between the demonism of Arthur Rimbaud and that of André Breton? Is vision enough or must we have the fruit of the vision in terms of poetry? Is madness enough or must we have the poem that emerges from the frenzy? Merely to write about heaven or hell is insufficient if the writing lacks the intuitive genius of form. And merely to be mad or prophetic is not enough unless the madness or the mysticism be of the prophetic variety. There is no good surrealist poetry because surrealism merely imitates the conditions of madness because it violates the genius of form by trying to make form insane! Compare such a technique with that of a true demonic poet, Rimbaud or Poe, who is almost classical in his craftsmanship. Notice also that the majority of English hymns are inferior and even abominable poems. The same is true of national anthems, political verse and other hortatory branches of the art—We need not look to the asylum or the monastery for poetry.

Literary poetry, the bulk of all poetry that lies between the blossoms and the roots, escapes analysis for hidden elements by and large; it is simply human poetry full of the foibles and tricks of wit that belong to wide awake life. But frequently we come upon the poet who gravitates toward mysticism or toward the depths but who nevertheless does not quite rise from the literary foliage. I think two such poets are Yeats and Rilke; both seem to possess everything except the conviction of their own visions, and almost deliberately they give us the impression of make-believe. Hart Crane, one of the poets whose manuscripts I want to discuss, suffered the opposite fate. Crane was that rare thing, a true demonic poet who, when his demon deserted him, faded into wretched literary pretense.

It seems then that the final test of validity, the final means of discovering the level of inspiration of a particular poet, lies nowhere but in the form. And if that is so, we are back where we started from—as Jung threatened: There is nothing to do but try to break through the poem from another

side. We have seen that conviction (vision or madness) does not count for much when it comes to producing a good poem for if that were so the greatest sufficers and the greatest visionaries would be the greatest poets. We have seen also that the will to be a poet doesn't count for much either. For to vision or madness or the poetic desire must be added the indispensable element of the knowledge of form. *Genius in poetry is probably only the intuitive knowledge of form.* The dictionary contains all words and a textbook on verse contains all meters but nothing can tell the poet which words to choose and in what rhythms to let them fall except his own intuitive knowledge of form. It is thus that form or style, to use the more common term, becomes the instrument of interpretation and the measure of the poet's gift. Form indeed must override any other consideration in the criterion of the true poem. The form is the intelligence of the poem and upon the form hangs the very life of the poem—One might add parenthetically that a great quantity of literary criticism today overlooks this tenet with the result that inferior works are judged side by side with the best on the grounds that both have just as much to say. This practice I think will eventually invalidate a whole corpus of our criticism.

Can the study of form under construction give evidence of the level of inspiration on which the poet stands at the time he composes a particular work? Or is the final evidence the finished work in which so many of our clues are buried? I think we are now constrained to use the former method if we are to storm the gates at all for even experts admit defeat in the other field. What we must do is to tear the poem down unless we are fortunate enough to have rescued the records of its creation. From working drafts, marginalia, personalia and the like we can proceed to the external form (psychology of imagery) to the materials of form (language and metric) to the sources of form (personality, tradition and the Unknown). We will then be as close to the place of the creative act as we can hope to get. In the case of the literary poem we can probably learn no more than the particular psychology of imagery but we do not expect this kind of poem to conceal anything from our view. The literary poem is written off the top of one's head as the humorous saying goes. But the poem of any of the other levels might well reveal that concealable material which will lead to the portals of discovery.

Before examining the manuscripts I would like to make one further observation about the peculiarities of this kind of research. In many cases the most difficult preliminary stages of composition seem to have been accomplished mentally that is, without the poet's knowledge of how many trials and errors he has overcome before his pen has touched paper.

The habitual poet perhaps has learned a technique of discard of which he is no longer aware. Therefore much valuable material will always be missing from the record. During the progress of the poem we often come upon a semi-final version of a verse or stanza which is so inferior to the final version that any question of establishing the relationship seems impossible. These are probably moments of the greatest importance to the poet and to us.

STUDY OF *The Express*, BY STEPHEN SPENDER

The author at the time of composition is a young man with certain identifiable ideas about progress, justice and social change. He is however a poet and an optimist who is making a search in himself for a new iconography which will implement his poetry as well as the beliefs he has adopted. Alternately he is tossed up to heights of happiness by his optimism and his poetic genius and thrown down into despondency by his social despair and his inability to assist in the rebirth. Like Whitman another poet with a sweeping political philosophy he fuses the love of comrades with a personal eros and saturates his verses with symbols of masculinity. One interpretation of *The Express* must suggest the masculine image of sexuality as one interpretation of *The Landscape Near an Aerodrome* must suggest the opposite: the destroyed image of feminine creativity with its ikons of grief-stricken women and the church. The more conscious stimulus which would evoke the theme of the poem about the train is the barely latent idea of progress and change with its corollary idea of escape (further than Edinburgh or Rome). The overt theme of course, is praise of the beauty of this machine and the ecstasy of its motion.

There are in the Lockwood Library's Spender notebook six sequential incremented versions which may be called drafts A B C D E and F. The initial draft is almost the completed poem in itself, except for the four final moving verses which lift the express from the rails and plunge it into a garden of night sky, birdsong and boughs. But there is a good deal of interference before this transitional miracle can be effected. The opening lines of this draft contain minor textual changes and two possibly significant ones. (By a minor change I mean one that moves only a negligible distance toward a different level. Thus the clear statement of pistons in becoming the black statement of pistons merely clarifies the metaphor of plain manifesto. A plain manifesto makes a clear statement but a plain manifesto, to put it in headlines, makes a black statement. It is extraordinary that in Spender's crowded imagery there is never any sense of confusion, even, as I shall try to show, when he switches

abruptly from the physical to the mystical image.) Here is the opening of the first draft:

After the first powerful plain manifesto

<sup>black</sup>  
The ~~clear~~ statement of pistons without more fuss  
But gliding like a queen she leaves the station

The first significant change is not actually a change at all but an obliterated word (completely indecipherable) between queen and she. I take it that the poet here is disturbed by the word queen which used in this particular meliorative connection puts up a warning signal in his mind. Queen is not very good socialism and it must be remembered that Spender is forging an appropriate language as he writes. But more than this the word probably raises the strange question of the sex of trains. The vehicle in the poem with its blackness, iron bolts, pistons and power argues for the male interpretation. The wheels' flight song, luminous self-possession, mystery and of course the analogy of ships at sea argue for the feminine interpretation. Also a decision becomes important because of the eleven subsequent *she's* and *her's* which would have to become *he's* and *his's*. The original impulse to make the symbol feminine Spender finds correct and the poem acquires a pleasing dualism at the outset.

The second significant change occurs in the imagery of the cemetery through which the express passes. Draft A stands:

Without bowing and with restrained unconcern  
She notices the houses humbly crowding outside  
And then the gasworks and at last the printed psalm  
Of death written by gravestones in the cemetery

Draft B makes the final alterations:

Without bowing and with restrained unconcern  
She passes the houses which humbly crowd outside  
The gasworks and at last the heavy page  
Of death printed by gravestones in the cemetery

Psalm is the undesirable word here. Spender's whole conception of death at this period is given very full treatment in *The Funeral* which we will examine in a moment. In keeping with the imagery of the manifesto printing and change the psalm is altered to the heavy page of death, that is to say a mere statement of death, without religious overtones. This consistency of aim contributes to the enormous force in the poem.

A third change is of possible interest. The express is now in open country and:

It is now she begins to sing—at first quite low  
And then loud and at last with a jazzy madness—

With a jazzy madness stood originally as with mad joy—a phrase almost devoid of tone. The sub

stitution of jazzy with its good bad (modern decadent) associations is a piece of extreme cleverness and in a sense would be the turning point of the poem or a lead to the departure of the train into the soft ecstasy of the closing lines but it is still too early for that There is this one seductive suggestion of the slattern and then a quick tightening of tunnels of brakes of innumerable bolts It is not yet time to leave the train

Another brilliant minor change occurs in the development of the verses

And always light aerial underneath this  
Is the tapping metre of her wheels (*Draft A*)

*Draft C* reads

And always light aerial underneath  
Is (Goes) the <sup>racing</sup>~~tapping~~ metre of her wheels  
which emerges in *Draft D* in the final form

And always light aerial underneath  
Goes the <sup>elate</sup>~~racing~~ metre of her wheels

Here again the perfect solution has been found to describe sensorially and emotionally the condition of the train at top speed By repeating the word elate by itself very rapidly one even awakens in the ear the characteristic music of the train

The poem according to *Draft C* is now at the half way mark The express has been put into full speed and the poet's problem is what to do with it There are two possible directions the express can take one toward the poet down as it were toward the depths of his psyche and up away from the poet and people into the night of comet flame and the bodiless world of the spirit Some such struggle is evident in the following *Drafts C* and *D* which should be shown in full *Draft C*

After the first powerful plain manifestoe  
The black statement of pistons without more fuss  
But gliding like a queen she leaves the station  
Without bowing and with restrained unconcern  
She passes the houses which humbly crowd outside  
The gasworks and at last the heavy page  
Of death printed by gravestones in the cemetery  
Beyond the town there lies the open country  
Where, gathering speed she acquires mystery

The luminous self possession of ships <sup>at</sup>~~on~~ ocean  
It is now she begins to sing—at first quite low  
~~And~~ Then loud and at last with a jazzy madness—  
The song of her whistle screaming at corners  
Of ~~blind~~ deafening tunnels brakes innumerable bolts  
And always light aerial underneath

Is (Goes) the <sup>racing</sup>~~tapping~~ metre of her wheels  
Her passengers (further than Edinburgh or Rome)

~~Explore new eras of wild happiness  
At night when dark flags touch the glass knock the glass  
And only the low stream line brightness  
Of moonlight on the tossing hills is white  
Rapt in what  
Entranced by a symphony (ies) they dream  
tapping  
Of gleaming metals and sharp strange shapes entrance  
lines  
Them in their rigid folds Not bird song no nor bough  
Breaking with honeyed buds nor dreams of India  
hunting  
And tracing through thick leaves the rare jewelled tiger  
So rules with stamped and iron image Can build  
The strange world where they turn as this  
Of jetting steam and rods She stops~~

In *Draft D* the first ten lines remain unaltered Then

It is now she begins to sing—at first quite low  
Then loud and at last with a jazzy madness—  
The song of her whistle screaming at corners  
Of deafening tunnels brakes innumerable bolts  
And always light aerial underneath

<sup>elate</sup>  
Goes the ~~racing~~ metre of her wheels  
Her passengers (further than Edinburgh or Rome)  
Explore new eras of wild happiness  
At night when dark flags knock the glass  
And only the low stream line brightness  
Of moonlight on the tossing hills is white  
~~On~~ They are wrapt in music no bird song nor bough  
Breaking with honey buds nor tale from India  
~~Of~~ hunting through dripping boughs the precious tiger  
Can build iron  
~~Creates~~ They are ruled round with lines  
builds  
~~And stamped with imagery which makes new worlds  
This strange new world  
And strange new forms of rods and jets of steam  
Stamp on their brains an image of new worlds  
Their brains are stamped pressed on by with forms  
They watch poured on by steam  
The images of power stamp their brain  
And of works whose fires  
And of metals moulten to create new works worlds  
And hear~~

Ruled round with iron lines

They watch the images of power that stamp their brain  
Impressed by thunder of waters & tearing steam  
And roar of furnace(s) that mould machines

It is probably the idea of travelers and passengers that awakens the complexity of dark associations in the poet's mind, and as we shall see it is only by eliminating people altogether that unity is maintained in the poem, and the express freed to establish itself in the cosmos Meanwhile the poem is beset with active and malignantly beautiful objects dark gusts, flags of wind that knock the glass dreams of

India, and a jeweled tiger Rapt in symphonies, the mind begins to dream then awakens for the dreams become tales—The question is how this irrelevant material got as far as these two versions of the poem, and what this material signifies I will attempt a guess And tracing through thick leaves the rare jeweled tiger and of hunting through dripping boughs the precious tiger are not even Spenderian images In poem 13, however, of Spender's first published book, we come upon something of interest

I feared more than tigers their muscles like iron  
And their jerking hands and knees tight on my arms  
They were light they sprang out behind hedges

The poet is here speaking of children who were rough Again,

We lacked the Spring like resources of the tiger

which comes from a political poem in which the poet begs that the future will never say that Spender's generation lacked the resources to build a new world Without knowing the sequence of composition of the three poems it is possible to see that the rough boys who sprang out at the boy Spender like tigers have a dual significance They hunted him and yet he chooses to identify himself with them he is the hunter and the hunted at once The rare jeweled tiger, the precious tiger the tiger with Spring-like resources (the pun is self explanatory) is possibly Spender's hound of heaven

There is one further problem of the transit of Spender's symbol of the express which I do not know where to locate It occurs in the seemingly child like verse At last further than Edinburgh or Rome and occurs in all six drafts of the poem The only thing I am sure of here is that the names are not simply place names The obvious connections would be Edinburgh the actual destination of the train (?) and Rome the past But in examining the verses that immediately follow the six Edinburgh and Rome configurations it seems that the names are only a springboard for the final destination of the express and the poem namely beyond the crest of the world where both train and poem reach the destination night This establishes the resolution of the poem the express is to be merged in darkness, in flame, in song, in boughs breaking with honey buds

Ah like a comet through flame she moves entranced  
Wrapped in her music no bird song no nor bough  
Breaking with honey buds shall ever equal

The mystical melting together of sight, sound and smell in these verses dispels the jazzy madness the mechanical elate meter of wheels and leaves us in a trance of excitement that is happy and acceptable

#### STUDY OF *The Funeral* BY STEPHEN SPENDER

The second Spender poem I want to examine is *The Funeral* which bears some relationship to *The Express* and does in fact, directly precede it in the first published edition In the notebook it occupies two pages and consists of two versions the first incomplete the second virtually finished A moral consideration of the poem is out of place here but it would be of help to remember that this work pleads an extreme case in an extreme manner and pursues its point to a mercilessly logical conclusion The argument is that grief for death is dead A worker has passed away but one who has given his life for the hive (the state) Therefore rejoice read lists of projects for building over his grave, and be thankful for what this man contributed A deleted line at the top of the second draft reads, No more are they haunted by the individual grief *Haunted* I think is the real key in which the poem is written

In the initial quatrain of the first draft we get a preliminary exercise of thought which is absent in *The Express* manuscript

On the little hill at the edge of town  
They stand amongst stiff grass and the breeze lifts their hair  
The strange cause of rejoicing that lightens their eyes  
Is the death of a hero of labour

This preparatory work the poet finds unsatisfactory It is too obvious too sentimental despite the curious theme it announces The weakness of this beginning nevertheless leads immediately into the almost final and very arresting opening

For death is ~~only~~ another milestone on their way

In the second draft the weak quatrain is obliterated and the conjunctive for free to drop out

Death is another milestone on their way

is a typically powerful Spenderian beginning But for the moment it is the rejected material that is of interest First there is the setting of the poem the locale which a few stanzas down we learn is London! Second there is the time which from the little hill phrase I would adduce to be soon just after the world revolution The little hill presumably denotes a little cemetery a new one not one of those infinite hideous and sprawling affairs where the pre-revolutionary dead are buried Finally, we are made to know that instead of grief there is rejoicing the poet still finds this strange for everything has become different quite suddenly

In the succeeding quatrain the poet discusses with himself the relative merits of jobs in the new world—or so it seems from the change in the text The



hero excelled all others in making say, driving belts Say is eventually thought superfluous, as is the moral question for which it stands Both the verse and the argument are strengthened by this simple deletion The stanza shows numerous textual revisions mostly pertinent to the political meaning of the poem

For death is ~~the last~~ festivity, it is the time for statistics

When they record how much <sup>one</sup> ~~this~~ atom contributed ~~to~~  
~~the state~~

are as glad as they him whence  
They ~~laugh as we lay him back~~ in the earth from which  
he came

And thank him for what he gave them

Stanza four is the London stanza and is of interest because it expresses what is *exactly* in the poet's mind but not what will help create the poem

Then follow the speeches and the songs of the new life  
And lists are read out of projects to build ~~new~~ steel works  
And to pull down

The worst slums around London

Steel works falls by the way in the next version and becomes projects for building In steel works we sense a militancy to which the poet probably objects (There is now no further need of militancy we are in the immediate future but we are already safe The worst of the slums around London becomes The last of the slums around London )

The fifth quatrain ends this version and the poem is begun again 'on the little hill at the edge of the town It now proceeds smoothly almost finally through all its seven quatrains, the first and fourth of which are later struck out Both of these are local political stanzas poetically they bear no relationship to the rest of the poem but are rather the stimuli that excite the creation in its development The closing stanza the most exciting of all, appears in the second version in finished form

No more are they haunted by the individual grief  
Nor the crocodile tears of European genius  
The decline of a culture  
Mourned by scholars who dream of the ghosts of Greek  
boys

This is the only moment when one feels a tremor of motion below the surface of the poem until this final quatrain we are standing in the near future Then the sudden look behind into the present I have never been sure what is meant by the crocodile tears of European genius though probably it has a political meaning for the initiated At any rate this quatrain is the only one that *appeared* without having to undergo development Can we presume from this that it is the inspired stanza

or that it contains the real substance of the poem? If so what does it mean and what light does it throw on the rest of the creation? Probably only this That Spender at this period experiences the individual grief and is haunted by it it is the one thing he must submerge in order to become a better socialist and a more effective revolutionary *He* is the individual grief upon which his scorn is showered In other works in this collection Spender constantly makes it clear that he is not using his revolutionary material for his own singing tree (his own aims) No doubt it is the enthusiasm of the political vision that enables him to dismiss the heritage of European genius with such finality Everything must go what is held most dear even oneself

*The Funeral* carries a tremendous shock in its quiet lines What in the notebook threatens to become merely a piece of boyish pettishness turns out to be a brilliant experiment in nihilism Anyone who has followed Spender's poetry closely will have recognized an integral struggle between himself and his idea of justice a struggle I think that is between Spender's mysticism and his socialism The poems about Beethoven and the truly great do not spring from the same psyche as the poems about comrades and the need for destruction The direction of the expression is not accidental but is a symptom of this poet's psychical direction There is in fact a sizeable mystical vocabulary in Spender which is most of the time overlooked but is now and then mislabeled romantic As iron heated red hot loses its own appearance and glows like fire is a typical Spenderian form it was written however by St Bernard Spender is a first rate language maker and it is therefore doubly interesting to notice the ease with which he draws upon the vocabulary of the ecstasies

Cross, rose pilgrimage missionary love wheel death distance the mystic One heaven peace trumpet sun spirit edge of being moth worms and others taken out of context would not appear to rise from the Spenderian vocabulary Some of the same words used by Yeats for example would carry only a literary force or a pseudo-mystical beauty Spender's mysticism it can be argued must be real because he has to fight it back and because he has to find a weapon, political materialism with which to render it harmless In his hand that weapon itself grows flowers, in the manner of an ancient miracle

#### STUDY OF *Philomena Andronico* BY WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

The following poem has never appeared in a book and I assume it is the poet's purpose to leave it only for a study of this kind Its worksheets consist of fifteen typed pages corrected in pencil they



present in all five versions. As a discarded William Carlos Williams piece, I think nevertheless that it throws some light on his *pratique* as well as on his particular poetic aims. In Williams as in Wallace Stevens to a lesser extent, we have the ultimate development of form that seeks to arrest or still the image. This is not to say that motion and action are dispensed with in this method, but that even when the subject matter is of a very violent nature, as is often the case with Williams, the extreme surface of the poem remains or attempts to remain at a dead calm. It is a poetry as closely allied to panting as any I know.

Readers who sometimes search for the logical word sequence in Williams are baffled at what seems a jumble of things set down without normal language relationships. What is good to remember in reading Williams is that the words, or at least the key words, are very like ideographs or symbols of the objects thought of. Ordinarily we do not call to mind the object or attribute for which a word stands; the word itself is enough to satisfy our desire for a meaning. In Williams the objects themselves all but spring up before our eyes, and it is the logic of these almost objects in careful arrangement that provides the narrative of ideas.

The poem is named *Philomena Andronico*, and from the context we learn that a little (immigrant?) girl is bouncing a ball. That is all the subject matter we have. Here is what seems to be the penultimate version of the manuscript.<sup>9</sup>

With the boys busy  
at ball  
in the worn lot  
nearby

She stands in  
the short street  
reflectively bouncing  
the red ball

Slowly  
practiced  
a little awkwardly  
throwing one leg over

not as she had done  
formerly  
screaming and  
missing

but slowly  
surely and then  
pausing first  
she throws the ball

with a full slow  
very slow

and easy motion  
following through

with a slow  
half turn  
as the ball flies  
and rolls gently

at the child's feet  
~~waiting beyond~~  
and yet he misses  
it and turns

and runs while she  
slowly regains  
her former  
pose

the  
then/ runs ~~her~~ fingers  
of one hand  
up through  
her loose short hair  
~~the quickly~~

leans her  
to draw ~~one~~ stocking  
tight and then  
~~the other~~  
~~waiting~~

in the warm still  
air

and tilts  
her hip  
and lets her arms  
fall loosely  
(waiting) at her sides

This poem, as I say, is the ABC of Williams technique. Nothing half so simple appears in any of his published work, most of which is as formally complex as this is elementary. We are lucky to find only the essentials of a Williams poem, in this case at least we are free to discuss only the color and the development of the ideographs. The poem is a study in the control of the objects it deals with and the deceleration of their motions.

In Draft A the word *busy* first comes under observation and is struck out. The second draft eliminates the first stanza entirely, only to pick it up in the third version, but without *busy* again. The fourth version restores the troublesome word, and it survives in the fifth and final forms. This particular problem is not peculiar to Williams, however, but to all poets. It merely questions a possibly inappropriate adjective. The next problem is of a different nature.

The meter in a visual poem of this kind is determined by spacing and by creating a mental stop or advance with the use of the appearance of the words, their groupings. Thus Version A reads

<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to notice that in Williams a change may involve only the typographical position of a word or a phrase.

She stands in  
the side street  
bouncing

a red ball slowly or a red  
ball slowly a

Version B reads

she stands in  
the side street  
bouncing a red

ball slowly

Version C repeats B and D inserts a decelerating  
adverb

she stands in  
the side street  
~~reflectively~~  
bouncing a red ball

slowly

which like busy is first doubted and finally ac-  
cepted The semi final version

She stands in  
the short street  
reflectively/ bouncing  
a ~~the~~ red ball

Slowly

introduces the further change the short street,  
which again defines a space The final draft of the  
manuscript

She stands in  
the short street  
reflectively bouncing  
the red ball

Slowly

definitely fixes the pace of the poem which never-  
theless tends to speed up The words slow slow-  
ly and very slow occur six times in the course  
of the poem Other brakes are reflectively surely  
pausing easy motion, gently, former pose,  
half turn, waiting, still air The word quickly  
is struck out in the semi final draft—I should sup-  
pose quickly were it not that it had persisted through  
so many versions

Throughout the evolution of the poem as much  
attention is given to the spacing of unchanged words  
and groups of words as to the internal changes  
themselves These are as varied and as numerous  
as occur in the worksheets of a Spender poem but  
are even more difficult to follow because we know  
so little of the medium and cannot follow the method  
of selection as clearly

Certain other word configurations in the poem

are extremely piquant They seem to add another  
dimension to the picture without indicating how  
Philomena stands in the side street (Draft B) bounc-  
ing a red ball and hoisting one leg

over not as  
formerly screaming  
and missing

Formerly could be a moment ago (the moment  
before the poem) or a year ago a recollection from  
the poet's past Screaming (with vexation?) does  
not help qualify the image The odd use of the  
word yet is another delicate reference to some  
hidden emotion in the observer

the ball flies  
and rolls  
gently at the child's

feet and yet he  
misses it and

I think yet is intended to convey a suggestion of  
uneasiness and to create an interference in the  
reader's mind

Judging this composition in the light of Williams  
more intricate work I think any conclusion would  
be risky except this The poet's emotions ideas and  
sensations are selected and tranquilized in the eye,  
then distributed on paper as ideographs and finally  
arranged as an artist arranges the elements in a  
picture The surface tension of this poetry is so great  
that it seems impossible for submerged material to  
break through or for the reader to see down through  
the exterior

#### STUDY OF *Cape Hatteras* BY HART CRANE

Everything about Hart Crane points to the poet  
possessed the man in the grip of the demon Three  
of his poetic ancestors Poe Baudelaire and Rimbaud  
belong to the deepest mines of the poetic psyche  
the fourth Walt Whitman presented him with the  
false vision of life which eventually Crane was to  
employ for his own self destruction Crane's instinct  
was for the depths but through circumstance and  
innocence this instinct was translated into the will  
to die His early work takes place aboveground he  
will pause long enough to be hypnotized by the  
shine of white buildings

As silent as a mirror is believed  
Realities plunge in silence by

I am not ready for repentance

When finally he is ready for repentance (the descent  
into the depths?) it will be too late to save himself  
He has been shown a false mythology in a mirror  
and plunging after it he will die *Ce ne peut être la*

*fin du monde en avançant* is the menacing super-  
scription at the beginning of his first book Narcissus  
is willing to plunge into the mirror at any rate he  
has caught a vision of his destiny But between the  
journey and the suicide lies the heart breaking road  
of disenchantment At last the myth falls apart  
before his eyes and the disappointment is too great  
to live with

By the time the poet has come to write the *Cape Hatteras* segment of his epic he already knows the futility of the poem. It is not only the weakest link in *The Bridge* its inspiration, a kind of hymn to Whitman threatens to poison the whole work.

Friends of Crane encouraged the poet to work over this section of *The Bridge* after it had advanced as far as the version I am going to discuss. Between this version<sup>10</sup> and the final form there must have been other worksheets: there are even differences between the Paris edition and the first American edition. Crane's method of composition kept him at work on a poem as long as it was available for improvement.

The majority of changes are external minor alterations made in the interest of a tighter meter or a more effective image.

Imponderable the dinosaur who  
sinks slow  
in which the who is dropped Or

Or to recount the priests march through Bombay—  
becomes without altering the number of syllables,  
a more exact description

Or how the priests walked—slowly through Bombay—  
The internal changes even in this advanced draft  
are often of the greatest import. A comparison of  
the changes in the second stanza discloses a deepen-  
ing of the image.

To that deep wonderment our native clay,  
Whose depth of red eternal flesh of Pocahontas—  
Those continental folded aeons surcharged  
With sweetness below derricks chimneys tunnels  
Is veined of that eternity that's pledged us  
While overhead like corkscrew squeaks of radio static  
The captured fume of space forms in the ears  
What whisperings of far lookouts on the main  
Relapsing into silence Time annuls—  
Time the serpent retrieves the telescope  
Constricts it to its primal nest of vertigos  
The labyrinth compressible of our own egos

Compare the final form

To that deep wonderment our native clay  
Whose depth of red eternal flesh of Pocahontus—

<sup>10</sup> The *Cape Hatteras* manuscript is not the property of the Lockwood Library but is quoted here with the permission of its owner Peter Blume

Those continental folded aeons surcharged  
With sweetness below derricks chimneys tunnel—  
Is veined by all that time has really pledged us  
And from above thin squeaks of radio static  
The captured fume of space foams in our ears—  
What whisperings of fat watches on the main  
Relapsing into silence while time clears  
Our lenses lifts a focus resurrects  
A periscope to glumpse what joys or pain  
Our eyes can share or answer—then deflects  
Us shunting to a labyrinth submersed  
Where each sees only his dim past reversed

These turgid verses in the first form are trying, as it were to end the poem The serpent Time takes back the telescope collapses it to the primal eye the pool of our own egos But this is too sudden for the poet and he gives Time back the telescope while she clears the lenses and resurrects—a periscope. The meaning of this sleight of hand may lie in the labyrinth submersed which Crane presumably would like to reach The darkening pool in the following stanza becomes the lucid pool a change if changes mean anything at all that is a rather desperate one The fatal image of the mirror is again to the fore

Left Hesperus mirrored in the lucid pool

The poetry now becomes reckless leaving the sea for  
the air, the submarine for the airplane

Dream cancels dream in this new realm of fact  
From which we wake into the dream of act  
Seeing himself an atom in a shroud—  
Man hears himself an engine in a cloud!

Hearing himself a locomotive in a cloud<sup>1</sup> is the first attempt. The poet does not succeed in assimilating this machine imagery as is his aim but instead gives us a burlesque Blakean line. The succeeding stanza invokes Walt Whitman and what is equally interesting a sudden wrath, the spurt that portends the death of the watcher. The wrath does not appear except in the printed version. The poet asks Whitman if infinity

Be still the same as when you walked the beach  
Near Paumanok—your lone patrol—  
and heard the wraith  
Through surf its bird note there a long time  
falling

The wraith might not be so prophetic after all, were it not for what follows. As in the tunnel where Crane meets the demonic eyes of Poe—like agate lanterns—here the poet is pursued by the eyes of Whitman which appear in the cliffs of Wall Street and back over Connecticut pastures, but chiefly in the sea.

Sea eyes and tidal, undenying bright with myth!

It is as illuminating a line as the poet has written about himself and his apprehensions. It seems to rise from the same deeps as another poem about a drowned father which sings of the pearls that were his eyes.

The following stanza is the well known prelude to machinery which begins. The nasal whine of power whips a new universe. It is not Crane at his best by any means but it throws light on his curious method of composing or rather bears out the connection of *artificial stimulation* and poetry in Crane's case. The poet's biographer records that Crane would sit at his desk with a jug of wine and a victrola going full blast often repeating the same jazzy tune again and again.<sup>11</sup> Horton believes that the visionary fervor which Crane achieved by means of such stimuli could not have been awakened without some such agitation of the senses. Both music and liquor eventually became identified in Crane's mind with the process of composition. It is also recorded that the poet derived giddy and half drunken sensations from machine noises, machine shapes and the gigantic motions of machines. Powers script—wound bobbin bound refined— / Is stopped to the slap of belts on booming spools spured / Into the bulging bouillon harnessed jelly of the stars. This crude and unworked poetry gives some idea of what he must have experienced before the demon of the machine.

Following the machine passage there comes a long dizzying adventure of the airplane. Two further images of sea death disappear from the printed version of the poem. The draft reads

Two brothers in a twinship left the dune the glazed  
lagoon —

the final phrase being omitted from the book

Seductions blue and schedules rife of doom!

becomes

To what fierce schedules rife of doom arise!

The Wright brothers theme leads into an excited vision of aerial warfare. In some manner this battle is telescoped into the *Cape Hatteras* theme the purpose being to unify the poem as much as possible. The draft version shows a large number of minor differences and at least one of interest. The draft reads

O bright circumferences heights employed to lift  
Wars fiery kennel interpolated red in various offerings  
which develops into

O bright circumferences heights employed to fly  
Wars fiery kennel masked in downy offerings —

<sup>11</sup> Philip Horton *Hart Crane: The Life of an American Poet* Norton

Nothing is gained, however. The poem is too far disrupted at this stage to achieve unity.

Two stanzas down we come upon an unintelligible reference to Sanskrit

Remember Falcon Eye

Thou hast a Sanscrit in thy sailor wrist a charge  
To conjugate infinity's far verb anew !

The printed version

Remember Falcon Ace

Thou hast there in thy wrist a Sanskrit charge  
To conjugate infinity's dim marge—  
Anew !

hardly clears up the puzzle which might serve as reference to the inscrutability of the text as itself.

It will be useful to transcribe the original of the next passage that invokes Whitman because it clarifies Crane's intent in the poem better than the finished version

But who has better held the heights than thou  
O Walt?—Ascensions that bespeak in my own veins  
Thee at the junction elegiac there of speed  
With blank eternity And thou dost wield the rebound  
seed

The inescapable equation there beyond below  
The competent grass the probable loam O Walt  
We wait some of us on the sand the ultimate frontier  
(Not wings but rhythm possible of wings!)  
And thou shalt bide us there beyond our fall  
For who was he but thou who undertook the plunge  
O carrier creator of songs breakless chain!

The indigestible idea of Whitman as the carrier creator who undertook the plunge drops from the revision which in other respects also shows enormous improvement

The stars have grooved our eyes with old persuasions  
Of love and hatred birth—surcease of nations  
But who has held the heights more sure than thou,  
O Walt!—Ascensions of thee hover in me now  
As thou at junctions elegiac there of speed  
With vast eternity, dost wield the rebound seed!  
The competent loam the probable grass—travail  
Of tides awash the pedestal of Everest full  
Not less than thou in pure impulse inbred  
To answer deepest soundings! O upward from the dead  
Thou bringest tally and a pact new bound  
Of living brotherhood!

With more relevancy Whitman is invoked as the spirit of the Mourner who has kept account of the wounds of armies from Appomattox to Somme. By now Crane has a binding thread of the tradition which he believes links him to Whitman his Master singer. From here to the end of the poem there are virtually no changes of any kind textual or otherwise. Either the poet has abandoned the poem or

he feels that he has accomplished finality in the version. The ending of the poem is neither better nor worse than the rest of it: it is merely a little clearer.

Only so much can be said of the *Cape Hatteras* poem in the draft and in the printed form. Unlike other sections of *The Bridge* with the exception of the sentimental *Indiana*, it is a piece of poorly conceived and poorly articulated work. That it fore-shadows the poet's death is of course highly conjectural, but that it discusses some means and aspects of death in rapid sequence makes it possible for us to say that Crane at this time had already come face to face with his destiny. We do know that when the poet was writing *Cape Hatteras* he had lost the confidence of his vision; his personality was already disintegrating, but his talent proved itself at least once more in his last Mexican poem *The Broken Tower*. The maudlin conclusion of *Cape Hatteras*, hand in hand with Walt under a rainbow, is the defeated cry of a demonic poet who has lost his way. It is not the cry of a man who has lost his gift, which was the weak construction Crane chose to put upon his dilemma.

#### SUMMARY

We should now be in a position to make some tentative conclusions about our findings. Have we demonstrated anything of interest or importance, or have we merely added to the vocabulary of critical slang? Is there any meaning to the discarded poem beyond what is already known? Is the door to the principle of creativity still closed?

To the last question we can answer yes, though still without involving ourselves in Jung's discouraging postulate. To the others we can make the following summary:

1 Literary, or wide awake poetry is the poetry of reaction in Jung's sense of the word. Given the necessary biographical data we should be able to make a complete analysis of its formation. But the poetry of the extremes, being the antithesis of mere reaction, must be pure stimulus in itself. The data of biography are here useless.

2 The creative activity is a sickness insofar as it is injurious to some other activity of the psyche. That definition, however, is of interest only to the doctor and the police. Where the consideration is the poetry, we must assume that the poet allows certain activities of his psyche to degenerate. The good poet who is a good specimen of the tribe is exceptional.

3 A poem may be dangerous, but only to the poet or someone else of a creative mind.

4 Among critics there is an awareness of psychic heights and depths in the creative mind; it is thought

that the finest poetry lies near these extremes. Gilbert Murray, for example, is sure that Sophocles was possessed by a series of devils when he wrote *Oedipus Rex*.

5 A prophecy can take place only after the presentation of a fact. Therefore prophetic (mystic or mantic) poetry is always reactive. Even though the prophecy is obscure, it can be made intelligible to the waking mind. An utterance of the demon, on the other hand, is obscurity itself; we do not even know who or what said it.

6 Nothing can create the poem but toil. After the Delphian oracle had pronounced, the priestly assistant rendered the message into intelligible prose or verse.

All we can say about a poem like *Kubla Khan* is that it was given by the demon and versified by the poet almost before he was awake. The assembling of references traced by J. L. Lowes tells the whole waking history of the poem. But there is a further secret. If Wordsworth had read everything Coleridge did and had fallen asleep over *Purchas His Pilgrimage*, he still would not have awakened to write *Kubla Khan*.

7 Poetry is but one form of expression of mystic or demonic vision. Religion, war, magic, the other fine arts are further forms.

8 Genius in art is probably only the intuitive knowledge of form.

9 The demonic poets are among the least prolific of artists and tend to despise the mob. The poets who love humanity often become mystics. Crane, however, thought his poems were for the people; this was part of the central delusion he picked up from Whitman. Elsewhere Crane asserted that he wanted to slap humanity in the face.

10 The struggle between Spender's mysticism and his socialism tends to result in the strengthening of the former. There is evidence in his manuscripts that he rejects material that arrives. Above all, he is concerned with lucidity. Light is opposed to Obscurity. This is more than a poetic method; it is a direction of life.

11 By the process of elumination, it might be shown that Williams is attracted to the depths of the poetic psyche, although the poem above indicates no such tendency. His most serious publications are charged with some force that arrives from a level below the calm. There is a sea-elephant in his poetry. But why he tries to still the waters is the question I cannot answer.

12 The most typical and valid expression of the American *psychosis* seems to me still to be found in Whitman. One cannot believe that this was written by Crane unless he understands that by *psychosis* is meant nothing more than the psychic process. But reading *psychosis* in the pathological sense, not

intended by Crane the statement gives us a truth

13 Crane tried poison twice before he succeeded in killing himself by drowning. That he contemplated death is known, but we have no reason to believe that the sea exerted any morbid influence over the poet. The evidence in *Cape Hatteras* must be discarded.

14 To my knowledge I have never seen a discarded poem that excelled the final form. On the other hand, no final poem can ever tell as much about the intention of the poet or about the poetic psyche as those worksheets which he almost systematically destroys.

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the methods used by Shapiro to analyze the workbooks he utilizes?
- 2 What are the advantages and the limitations of the method employed?

3 What kind of conclusions can such methods arrive at? How do they differ from the methods and conclusions of the older and more traditional critical procedures? Which seems to you the more fruitful?

4 What is Shapiro's theory of the poet? How does it compare with Plato's or Eliot's?

5 What does Shapiro mean by form? How does this compare with Gulliey Jimson's notion of form?

6 How valid are Shapiro's conclusions? Are they the result of the analysis of the materials he has in hand or do they come from other sources of information at his disposal? Do these conclusions throw any light on the making of a poem? Do they help in effecting a judgment of a poem?

7 Does this method help us to arrive at a satisfactory definition of a poem?

8 Can the psychological analysis be used for poems for which there are no worksheets? Also, can it be used for a poem of the size and range as for example *Othello*?

9 Does this method tend to focus interest on the poet at the expense of the poem?



# THE SHORT STORY







## INTRODUCTION

### *The Short Story*

It may seem to be a rather obvious thing to say that the short story is characterized by the fact that it is short but this limitation of length imposes upon it certain patterns which distinguish it from the other forms of fiction. The novelist for example may move along at a leisurely pace examine what interests him with care explain his attitudes to whatever extent he wishes, portray persons and events in the minutest detail. He has this freedom because the novel is not restricted in length and is sufficiently flexible in form to allow him to do practically whatever he wishes. The short story writer on the other hand is presented with the artistic problem of saying what he wishes to say within a comparatively small space and consequently he is compelled to exercise a rigorous choice of material.

For this reason the short story is concerned with what can be called a *crisis situation*. All the events attitudes and circumstances which have led up to this crisis have already taken place before the story opens and the reader is placed so to speak right in the middle of a matured situation. Let us take, for example a story about a man and wife who have come to a serious point in their marriage where they are considering the need for separation. Each of them had a long life before they met they went through a period of courtship they were married they lived together for many years. Each of them was the product to a certain extent of a host of environmental and hereditary factors, each of them had hopes doubts misgivings pleasures good fortune, and bad luck. But all of this is in the past, the story is concerned with a single point in their lives where for one reason or another, events have so taken place as to force them to make a serious choice. The novel might well have taken us through the lives of each of these people and allowed us to see them as children and as young people but the short story can only present them to us as they are at a particular stage in their lives where events have come to a head in a crisis.

There are however a number of things about these people that we need to know in order to understand the nature of the crisis. It may be, for example that the marriage is failing because the husband has invariably been thoughtless, or because there has been a religious difference or because there are no children or because the parents have

interfered, or because of financial difficulties. The crisis has its origins in the past and has not just blown up suddenly for no reason. The author therefore must in some form give to the reader enough of the background of character and events to enable him to comprehend the action of the story. But since he cannot possibly give everything, he must choose carefully only those attributes and events which have a direct bearing upon the crisis situation itself. He must make a selection of material which leads to the second characteristic of the short story that of *selective exposition*.

We can say then that through selective exposition the author of a short story provides the reader with the information he must have to understand the nature of the crisis. We must be careful, however to recognize that a crisis, in the sense that we are using the term here is not necessarily a cataclysmic event of tremendous import. Rather a crisis is the point where it is necessary through an act or a decision, to resolve a *conflict*. Without conflict no piece of fiction can really exist. In its simplest and most common use the term conflict refers to a battle often between two persons. But in literature a conflict does not have to be a fight between two men or between two individuals it may often be a battle between two opposing points of view or between what a man wants to do and what he thinks he ought to do. A conflict arises when it is necessary to choose among several possible solutions to a problem and when only one choice may be made. To return for a moment to our couple whose marriage is not working out satisfactorily—whatever the reasons for the crisis a conflict has arisen which must be solved in one way or the other. The couple must either separate or not and in deciding what they are going to do they must in effect resolve the conflict which pulls them in opposite directions.

This does not mean however, that both the husband and the wife are equally involved in the conflict. The husband may be perfectly content and even unaware that his wife is thinking of leaving him. The conflict may be present in the mind of only one of the two persons, or may exist in a different form in each of them. The question thus arises as to where the resolution of the conflict is going to take place. In other words, *whose story is it?* If a crisis situation consists of a conflict which must be resolved through a choice this choice must be made by some one. If in our example the story is told in terms of the husband then we may expect that in one form or another the crisis will be resolved by the husband either through a positive act or through a change in attitude. In such a case the husband would be the *protagonist* the person in whose terms the story is written.

Often of course, the protagonist is what we loosely

call the hero of a story and can be easily recognized because he dominates the scene. But this concept of the term can lead us astray. A protagonist is the character or the attitude in terms of which a story is written. He may or may not be the central or dominating person if we judge importance by the number of appearances in the story. He is however the person who changes as a result of the experience in the story.

We said earlier that if a conflict must be resolved by a choice, this choice must be made by some one. We should perhaps have said that this is true if the short story is to be an honest piece of literature. Honesty in literature is somewhat different from honesty in human relationships, although it is not entirely unrelated. An honest story is one in which the conclusion stems entirely from the material presented by the author and is plausibly, logically, and reasonably related to that material. An honest story therefore excludes the operation of outside forces suddenly brought in to resolve a situation and does not wrench material around in order to make things come out in a way which the reader might prefer. Unfortunately not all writing is honest in this respect, and while much of it is published and enjoyed, it should not be confused with the literature of the sincere and thoughtful artist. To illustrate the point, consider a young man who enters a bank and notices that a large pile of money is within easy reach of his hand. The teller has turned his back and there are no guards in sight. Here we will all admit is a conflict between a strong desire for the money and a moral sense which says that it is wrong to steal. The young man must choose between the two desires, and since it is possible for him to steal the money without detection, it is clear that if he should decide not to take it, his decision will have been made from within himself; that is, it will represent his own choice. On the other hand, suppose that just as he is turning the matter over in his mind, the teller returns to the window and the guard strolls up near to him. If he then decides not to take the money, it may well be that his choice has been made for him by the turn of outside events rather than by himself. Such a decision in reality tells us nothing about his honesty or about morality in general, because it depends entirely upon forces and factors which operate outside the control of the person involved. It is much like the movies of the early days when the hero embattled against overwhelmingly powerful enemies who were on the point of overcoming him, was saved by the fortuitous arrival of a detachment of United States Marines. However glad we may have been that the Marines arrived in time, we must admit that the conflict was decided by external forces and was not indicative of any special courage on the hero's part.

Thus if a choice is made by events rather than by an individual, the story can stand for very little. Whereas dishonesty in human experience may cause harm and pain, the penalty for literary dishonesty is meaninglessness. This meaninglessness does not result from any lack of interest on the part of the reader in the development of a plot, but is inherent in the nature of the resolution itself. Whenever an implausible conclusion unrelated to the character or the events is introduced by the author, any other conclusion would be just as feasible. If just any conclusion is possible, then none is significant of anything but the arbitrary decision of the author, and the literary experience fails to imply meaning. A complex situation can, of course, be solved by killing a number of people in an accident. This certainly has the virtue of solving the problem by getting rid of the people involved, but it is really not a solution at all. The honest author does not manipulate events and wrench his plot out of joint in order to bring about a certain solution.

We demand then of the honest story that a choice be made or a decision arrived at, or a change permitted, on the part of the protagonist, and we demand this in order that the story may stand for something. But when we speak of a story which stands for something, we are making yet another demand upon literature and asking that it have a theme. Now theme is not the same as moral, and it is not a matter of a little maxim designed to show us how to live. Literature is not designed to show us how to live or to point morals, but rather to illuminate and clarify the complex business of life and of human relations. It is after all much simpler to say, Honor thy father and mother, than it is to write a story about it, and there is a place for maxims and sayings and commandments. The theme of a story is the significance of what has happened in the story, the generalization of the one series of events into a meaningful statement.

Let us revert once again to the couple whose marriage has come to a crucial point. Honesty makes us demand that the husband or the wife decide ultimately on a course of action. Let us assume that the husband, recognizing that his thoughtlessness has been at fault, decides within himself to correct his behavior and that as a result he does not precipitate a separation. We have seen that no solution based upon external events (the sudden announcement at the end of the story, for example, that a baby is expected or the sudden death of the wife in an accident) is acceptable and that the choice must be an honest one which stems from the character himself. We might then fall into the easy error of assuming that the theme of the story is that we should always preserve marriage. This may or may not be so, but if we so constitute the theme, we are merely

assuming that the purpose of the story is to teach us a lesson and to give us an answer

Consider on the other hand that the theme of this hypothetical story is the relationship of men and women in marriage. It is a complex, subtle, and involved relationship which presents many problems and involves a large number of attitudes. Moreover, it is a universal relationship in the sense that men and women in all societies live together in a marriage situation. First of all, then, a story of this sort can affect us because it treats of human affairs without regard to who we are or when we live. In this case, the husband has seen that there are patterns of behavior which can lead to far more serious consequences than he had really thought, and he has perhaps gained as a result of the situation a greater insight into the significance of behavior. If the story is honestly done, it can serve to illuminate and to clarify a whole set of ideas which we might otherwise not have understood or come upon. The significance of the story will be different for each reader—the theme may be summed up as that of human relationship.

In order, however, for a story to have universal significance, it is necessary not only that the resolution of the conflict come from the honest choice of the protagonist rather than from outside, but that this choice be consistent with the sort of person he is and has been portrayed as being throughout the story. Just as the arrival of the Marines in the nick of time represents a dishonest wrenching of the plot in order to save the hero, so does a completely unmotivated decision on the part of a character represent a dishonest wrenching of events in order to produce a desired ending. As much as we would like to think so, it is unfortunately not true that people change in a blinding flash and see the right suddenly. A miserly, selfish man who has hoarded his wealth and underpaid his help for fifty years is not likely on a Tuesday morning to wake up and

begin to be generous. A man who has neglected his child will probably not see the error of his ways just because his favorite cake awaits him one night when he comes home. It is not that people cannot change and change substantially, but rather that if they do change it is because of the operation of a series of influences which work on them. Unmotivated change and unmotivated action is that which takes place in a way inconsistent with the character as he has been portrayed. A man must always be shown as having the potentialities of change if his change is to be meaningful.

There are several elements that make up a short story. We have been talking so far about certain problems of taste and discrimination in order to suggest ways in which it is possible to arrive at standards of excellence. It is our obligation always to demand the very best, but before we can do so there must be some notion of what the best consists of. You will find no unanimity of opinion in literary criticism; a story which is highly praised by one will be disliked by another, because there are no absolute standards and no absolute answers. But you will find a unanimity in tasteful standard: that is, you will find that persons of discrimination will more or less agree on what they want even if they disagree on where it is to be found. And in general these standards are those of honesty, insight, clarity, and that intangible aspect that we may term humaneness or morality. A story should give insight in the last analysis into this complex, difficult, and amazing business of living. It need not be a deep insight; it need not be more than a kind of oblique illumination, but if it is humane and springs from humanity it has done a needed and a great thing. If a story does not do this, we may have a means of passing an hour or two. This is not illegitimate, but it is so much less than we have a right to that it hardly seems the most profitable way of reading.



## TEXTS

# The Beast in the Jungle

*Henry James*

*The Beast in the Jungle* which appeared for the first time in 1903 is recognized as one of the finest stories in English and as perhaps the best of the shorter works of Henry James. There are several reasons for this opinion. First *The Beast in the Jungle* marks in its concern with psychological development and inner action the tendency of modern writing to ignore external episodes in favor of an understanding of the subtle states of feeling which motivate individuals and inform their reactions. That is the area of interest in the story lies not in what the characters do but in how they constitute what happens around them. External action is almost entirely absent and the plot as we tend to conceive the term is virtually bare. Second the fabric of the story implies an assumption on the part of James that values are to be found and understood in terms of individual experience rather than in the larger framework of society. The story develops the growth of a strongly ironic awareness on the part of Marcher of the implications of his conduct with respect to Miss Bartram and of the nature of grief; these relationships and emotions are universal insofar as they are apposite to the condition of man in society but James concentrates upon the illumination to Marcher of his own motivations as a psychological man rather than as a product of any particular social forces.

It is interesting in this regard to compare Hawthorne's approach to Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter* where the problem is that of the particular woman, Hester, in a particular set of social circumstances. Third the story is typical in its form of the style of Henry James who stands in relation to the material in a curious position. In the older narrative forms particularly those of nineteenth century prose fiction the author acted as narrator of a series of episodes and events which in effect he was reporting to the reader on the tacit understanding that he knew of them and the reader did not. These events were largely external that is they consisted for the most part of action albeit in many cases the author would take occasion to discuss some point in what was essentially an intercalary essay. Henry James writing at the beginning of a period in which the search for understanding was to be in terms of the psychological constituency of the individual man nonetheless employs what is essentially the same narrative technique as that of his predecessors, with the important exception that James

is describing in most instances not external but rather internal action. The result is the curiously involuted style which has in its own right made James famous—a style in which the contrived nature of the syntax dispels any possible illusion that it reflects reality and prevents the reader by its very artificiality from becoming lost in the action or swept up in the story—leaving him in effect with the sole alternative of reading the story as James intended as an intellectual study of feeling motivation and subtle relationship.

A number of characteristics follow from the nature of the story: there is little physical or naturalistic background against which to place the action with the result that an element of the unreal pervades the story; we must accept James's interpretation of behavior because each example is given to us with commentary and is not in itself necessarily typical of the purpose for which James is using it. The disclosure at the grave which is the climax of the story takes place through the introduction of a character who had not previously appeared and who is subject in consequence to the structural weakness of the *deus ex machina*. The story tends to be allegorical in nature rather than symbolic and on the whole despite the essentially intellectual nature of the problem as James presents it the effect is probably more strongly that of tone rather than of idea.

I  
WHAT determined the speech that startled him in the course of their encounter scarcely matters being probably but some words spoken by himself quite without intention—spoken as they lingered and slowly moved together after their renewal of acquaintance. He had been conveyed by friends an hour or two before to the house at which she was staying the party of visitors at the other house of whom he was one, and thanks to whom it was his theory as always that he was lost in the crowd had been invited over to luncheon. There had been after luncheon much dispersal all in the interest of the original motive, a view of Weatherend itself and the fine things intrinsic features pictures heirlooms treasures of all the arts that made the place almost famous and the great rooms were so numerous that guests could wander at their will hang back from the principal group and in cases where they took such matters with the last seriousness give themselves up to mysterious appreciations and measurements. There were persons to be observed singly or in couples bending toward objects in out of the way corners with their hands on their knees and their heads nodding quite as with the emphasis of an excited sense of smell. When they were two they either mingled their sounds of ecstasy or melted into silences of even deeper import so that there were aspects of the occasion that gave it for Marcher much

the air of the 'look round, previous to a sale highly advertised that excites or quenches as may be, the dream of acquisition. The dream of acquisition at Weatherend would have had to be wild indeed, and John Marcher found himself among such suggestions, disconcerted almost equally by the presence of those who knew too much and by that of those who knew nothing. The great rooms caused so much poetry and history to press upon him that he needed some straying apart to feel in a proper relation with them though this impulse was not as happened like the gloating of some of his companions to be compared to the movements of a dog sniffing a cupboard. It had an issue promptly enough in a direction that was not to have been calculated.

It led briefly in the course of the October afternoon to his closer meeting with May Bartiam whose face a reminder, yet not quite a remembrance as they sat much separated at a very long table had begun merely by troubling him rather pleasantly. It affected him as the sequel of something of which he had lost the beginning. He knew it and for the time quite welcomed it as a continuation but didn't know what it continued which was an interest or an amusement the greater as he was also somehow aware—yet without a direct sign from her—that the young woman herself hadn't lost the thread. She hadn't lost it but she wouldn't give it back to him, he saw without some putting forth of his hand for it and he not only saw that but saw several things more things odd enough in the light of the fact at the moment some accident of grouping brought them face to face he was still merely fumbling with the idea that any contact between them in the past would have had no importance. If it had had no importance he scarcely knew why his actual impression of her should so seem to have so much the answer to which however was that in such a life as they all appeared to be leading for the moment one could but take things as they came. He was satisfied without in the least being able to say why that this young lady might roughly have ranked in the house as a poor relation satisfied also that she was not there on a brief visit but was more or less a part of the establishment—almost a working a remunerated part. Didn't she enjoy at periods a protection that she paid for by helping among other services, to show the place and explain it, deal with the tiresome people, answer questions about the dates of the building the styles of the furniture the authorship of the pictures the favourite haunts of the ghost? It wasn't that she looked as if you could have given her shillings—it was impossible to look less so. Yet when she finally drifted toward him distinctly handsome, though ever so much older—older than when he had seen her before—it might have been as an effect of her guessing that he had

within the couple of hours devoted more imagination to her than to all the others put together, and had thereby penetrated to a kind of truth that the others were too stupid for. She *was* there on harder terms than any one she was there as a consequence of things suffered one way and another in the interval of years and she remembered him very much as she was remembered—only a good deal better.

By the time they at last thus came to speech they were alone in one of the rooms—remarkable for a fine portrait over the chimney place—out of which their friends had passed and the charm of it was that even before they had spoken they had practically arranged with each other to stay behind for talk. The charm happily was in other things too—partly in there being scarce a spot at Weatherend without something to stay behind for. It was in the way the autumn day looked into the high windows as it waned the way the red light breaking at the close from under a low sombre sky reached out in a long shaft and played over old wainscots, old tapestry old gold old colour. It was most of all perhaps in the way she came to him as if since she had been turned on to deal with the simpler sort, he might should he choose to keep the whole thing down just take her mild attention for a part of her general business. As soon as he heard her voice however the gap was filled up and the missing link supplied the slight irony he divined in her attitude lost its advantage. He almost jumped at it to get there before her. I met you years and years ago in Rome. I remember all about it. She confessed to disappointment—she had been so sure he didn't and to prove how well he did he began to pour forth the particular recollections that popped up as he called for them. Her face and her voice all at his service now worked the miracle—the impression operating like the torch of a lamplighter who touches into flame, one by one a long row of gas jets. Marcher flattered himself the illumination was brilliant yet he was really still more pleased on her showing him with amusement that in his haste to make everything right he had got most things rather wrong. It hadn't been at Rome—it had been at Naples, and it hadn't been eight years before—it had been more nearly ten. She hadn't been either with her uncle and aunt but with her mother and her brother, in addition to which it was not with the Pemples *he* had been but with the Boyers coming down in their company from Rome—a point on which she insisted a little to his confusion and as to which she had her evidence in hand. The Boyers she had known but didn't know the Pemples, though she had heard of them, and it was the people he was with who had made them acquainted. The incident of the thunderstorm that had raged round them with such violence as to drive them for refuge into an

excavation—this incident had not occurred at the Palace of the Cæsars but at Pompeii on an occasion when they had been present there at an important find

He accepted her amendments he enjoyed her corrections though the moral of them was she pointed out that he *really* didn't remember the least thing about her and he only felt it as a drawback that when all was made strictly historic there didn't appear much of anything left They lingered together still, she neglecting her office—for from the moment he was so clever she had no proper right to him—and both neglecting the house just waiting as to see if a memory or two more wouldn't again breathe on them It hadn't taken them many minutes after all to put down on the table, like the cards of a pack, those that constituted their respective hands, only what came out was that the pack was unfortunately not perfect—that the past invoked invited, encouraged could give them naturally no more than it had It had made them anciently meet—her at twenty him at twenty five but nothing was so strange they seemed to say to each other as that while so occupied it hadn't done a little more for them They looked at each other as with the feeling of an occasion missed the present would have been so much better if the other in the far distance in the foreign land hadn't been so stupidly meagre There weren't apparently all counted more than a dozen little old things that had succeeded in coming to pass between them trivialities of youth simplicities of freshness, stupidities of ignorance small possible germs but too deeply buried—too deeply (didn't it seem?) to sprout after so many years Marcher could only feel he ought to have rendered her some service—saved her from a capsized boat in the Bay or at least recovered her dressing bag filched from her cab in the streets of Naples by a lazzarone with a stiletto Or it would have been nice if he could have been taken with fever all alone at his hotel and she could have come to look after him to write to his people to drive him out in convalescence *Then* they would be in possession of the something or other that their actual show seemed to lack It yet somehow presented itself this show, as too good to be spoiled so that they were reduced for a few minutes more to wondering a little helplessly why—since they seemed to know a certain number of the same people—their reunion had been so long averted They didn't use that name for it but then delay from minute to minute to join the others was a kind of confession that they didn't quite want it to be a failure Their attempted supposition of reasons for then not having met but showed how little they knew of each other There came in fact a moment when Marcher felt a positive pang

It was vain to pretend she was an old friend for all the communities were wanting in spite of which it was as an old friend that he saw she would have suited him He had new ones enough—was surrounded with them for instance on the stage of the other house as a new one he probably wouldn't have so much as noticed her He would have liked to invent something get her to make believe with him that some passage of a romantic or critical kind *had* originally occurred He was really almost reaching out in imagination—as against time—for something that would do and saying to himself that if it didn't come this sketch of a fresh start would show for quite awkwardly bungled They would separate, and now for no second or no third chance They would have tried and not succeeded Then it was just at the turn as he afterwards made it out to himself that everything else failing she herself decided to take up the case and as it were save the situation He felt as soon as she spoke that she had been consciously keeping back what she said and hoping to get on without it a scruple in her that immensely touched him when by the end of three or four minutes more he was able to measure it What she brought out at any rate, quite cleared the air and supplied the link—the link it was so odd he should frivolously have managed to lose

You know you told me something I've never forgotten and that again and again has made me think of you since it was that tremendously hot day when we went to Sorrento across the bay for the breeze What I allude to was what you said to me on the way back as we sat under the awning of the boat enjoying the cool Have you forgotten?

He had forgotten and was even more surprised than ashamed But the great thing was that he saw in this no vulgar reminder of any sweet speech The vanity of women had long memories but she was making no claim on him of a compliment or a mistake With another woman a totally different one he might have feared the recall possibly even of some imbecile offer So in having to say that he had indeed forgotten he was conscious rather of a loss than of a gain he already saw an interest in the matter of her mention I try to think—but I give it up Yet I remember the Sorrento day

I'm not very sure you do May Buttram after a moment said and I'm not very sure I ought to want you to It's dreadful to bring a person back at any time to what he was ten years before If you've lived away from it, she smiled, so much the better

Ah if *you* haven't why should I? he asked

Lived away, you mean from what I myself was?

From what *I* was I was of course an ass Maicher went on, but I would rather know from

you just the sort of ass I was than—from the moment you have something in your mind—not know anything

Still however she hesitated But if you've completely ceased to be that sort—?

Why I can then all the more bear to know Besides perhaps I haven't

Perhaps Yet if you haven't she added I should suppose you'd remember Not indeed that *I* in the least connect with my impression the invidious name you use If I had only thought you foolish she explained the thing I speak of wouldn't so have remained with me It was about yourself She waited as if it might come to him but as only meeting her eyes in wonder he gave no sign she burnt her ships Has it ever happened?

Then it was that while he continued to stare a light broke for him and the blood slowly came to his face, which began to burn with recognition Do you mean I told you—? But he faltered lest what came to him shouldn't be right lest he should only give himself away

It was something about yourself that it was natural one shouldn't forget—that is if one remembered you at all That's why I ask you she smiled if the thing you then spoke of has ever come to pass?

Oh then he saw, but he was lost in wonder and found himself embarrassed This, he also saw, made her sorry for him as if her allusion had been a mistake It took him but a moment, however, to feel it hadn't been, much as it had been a surprise After the first little shock of it her knowledge on the contrary began even if rather strangely to taste sweet to him She was the only other person in the world then who would have it and she had had it all these years while the fact of his having so breathed his secret had unaccountably faded from him No wonder they couldn't have met as if nothing had happened I judge, he finally said, that I know what you mean Only I had strangely enough lost any sense of having taken you so far into my confidence

Is it because you've taken so many others as well?

I've taken nobody Not a creature since then  
So that I'm the only person who knows?  
The only person in the world?

Well, she quickly replied I myself have never spoken I've never, never repeated of you what you told me She looked at him so that he perfectly believed her Their eyes met over it in such a way that he was without a doubt And I never will

She spoke with an earnestness that as if almost excessive, put him at ease about her possible derision Somehow the whole question was a new luxury to him—that is from the moment she was in possession

If she didn't take the sarcastic view she clearly took the sympathetic and that was what he had had in all the long time from no one whomsoever What he felt was that he couldn't at present have begun to tell her and yet could profit perhaps exquisitely by the accident of having done so of old Please don't then We're just right as it is

Oh I am, she laughed if you are! To which she added Then you do still feel in the same way?

It was impossible he shouldn't take to himself that she was really interested though it all kept coming as perfect surprise He had thought of himself so long as abominably alone and lo he wasn't alone a bit He hadn't been it appeared for an hour—since those moments on the Sorrento boat It was *she* who had been, he seemed to see as he looked at her—she who had been made so by the graceless fact of his lapse of fidelity To tell her what he had told her—what had it been but to ask something of her? something that she had given in her charity without his having by a remembrance, by a return of the spirit failing another encounter so much as thanked her What he had asked of her had been simply at first not to laugh at him She had beautifully not done so for ten years, and she was not doing so now So he had endless gratitude to make up Only for that he must see just how he had figured to her What exactly was the account I gave—?

Of the way you did feel? Well, it was very simple You said you had had from your earliest time as the deepest thing within you the sense of being kept for something rare and strange possibly prodigious and terrible that was sooner or later to happen to you that you had in your bones the foreboding and the conviction of, and that would perhaps overwhelm you

Do you call that very simple? John Marcher asked

She thought a moment It was perhaps because I seemed, as you spoke, to understand it

You do understand it? he eagerly asked

Again she kept her kind eyes on him You still have the belief?

Oh! he exclaimed helplessly There was too much to say

Whatever it's to be, she clearly made out, it hasn't yet come

He shook his head in complete surrender now It hasn't yet come Only you know, it isn't anything I'm to *do* to achieve in the world to be distinguished or admired for I'm not such an ass as *that* It would be much better no doubt, if I were

It's to be something you're merely to suffer?

Well say to wait for—to have to meet, to face, to see suddenly break out in my life possibly destroying all further consciousness, possibly annihilating



me possibly on the other hand only altering every thing striking at the root of all my world and leaving me to the consequences, however they shape themselves

She took this in but the light in her eyes continued for him not to be that of mockery Isn't what you describe perhaps but the expectation—or at any rate the sense of danger familiar to so many people—of falling in love?

John Marcher wondered Did you ask me that before?

No—I wasn't so free and easy then But it's what strikes me now

Of course he said after a moment, it strikes you Of course it strikes *me* Of course what's in store for me may be no more than that The only thing is, he went on that I think if it had been that I should by this time know

Do you mean because you've *been* in love? And then as he but looked at her in silence You've been in love and it hasn't meant such a cataclysm, hasn't proved the great affair?

Here I am, you see It hasn't been overwhelming

Then it hasn't been love, said May Bartram

'Well, I at least thought it was I took it for that—I've taken it till now It was agreeable it was delightful it was miserable he explained But it wasn't strange It wasn't what *my* affairs to be

You want something all to yourself—something that nobody else knows or *has* known?

It isn't a question of what I want—God knows I don't want anything It's only a question of the apprehension that haunts me—that I live with day by day

He said this so lucidly and consistently that he could see it further impose itself If she hadn't been interested before she'd have been interested now Is it a sense of coming violence?

Evidently now too again he liked to talk of it I don't think of it as—when it does come—necessarily violent I only think of it as natural and as of course above all unmistakeable I think of it simply as *the* thing *The* thing will of itself appear natural

Then how will it appear strange?

Marcher bethought himself It won't—to *me*

To whom then?

Well he replied smiling at last say to you

Oh then I'm to be present?

Why you *are* present—since you know

I see She turned it over But I mean at the catastrophe

At this for a minute their lightness gave way to their gravity it was as if the long look they exchanged held them together It will only depend on yourself—if you'll watch with me

Are you afraid? she asked

Don't leave me *now* he went on

Are you afraid? she repeated

Do you think me simply out of my mind? he pursued instead of answering Do I merely strike you as a harmless lunatic?

No said May Bartram I understand you I believe you

You mean you feel how my obsession—poor old thing!—may correspond to some possible reality?

To some possible reality

Then you *will* watch with me?

She hesitated then for the third time put her question Are you afraid?

Did I tell you I was—at Naples?

No, you said nothing about it

Then I don't know And I should *like* to know said John Marcher You'll tell me yourself whether you think so If you'll watch with me you'll see

Very good then They had been moving by this time across the room and at the door before passing out they paused as for the full wind up of their understanding I'll watch with you said May Bartram

## II

The fact that she knew—knew and yet neither chafed him nor betrayed him—had in a short time begun to constitute between them a goodly bond which became more marked when within the year that followed their afternoon at Weatherend the opportunities for meeting multiplied The event that thus promoted these occasions was the death of the ancient lady her great aunt under whose wing since losing her mother, she had to such an extent found shelter and who, though but the widowed mother of the new successor to the property had succeeded—thanks to a high tone and a high temper—in not forfeiting the supreme position at the great house The deposition of this personage arrived but with her death, which, followed by many changes made in particular a difference for the young woman in whom Marcher's expert attention had recognised from the first a dependent with a pride that might ache though it didn't bristle Nothing for a long time had made him easier than the thought that the aching must have been much soothed by Miss Bartram's now finding herself able to set up a small home in London She had acquired property to an amount that made that luxury just possible, under her aunt's extremely complicated will, and when the whole matter began to be straightened out which indeed took time she let him know that the happy issue was at last in view He had seen her again before that day both because she had more than once accompanied the ancient lady to town and because he had paid another visit to the friends who so conveniently made of Weather



extend one of the charms of their own hospitality. These friends had taken him back there—he had achieved there again with Miss Bartam some quiet detachment, and he had in London succeeded in persuading her to more than one brief absence from her aunt. They went together on these latter occasions, to the National Gallery and the South Kensington Museum where among vivid reminders they talked of Italy at large—not now attempting to recover, as at first, the taste of their youth and their ignorance. That recovery, the first day at Weatherend had served its purpose well, had given them quite enough so that they were to Marchers sense no longer hovering about the headwaters of their stream but had felt their boat pushed sharply off and down the current.

They were literally afloat together, for our gentleman this was marked quite as marked as that the fortunate cause of it was just the buried treasure of her knowledge. He had with his own hands dug up this little hoard brought to light—that is to within reach of the dim day constituted by their discretions and privacies—the object of value the hiding place of which he had after putting it into the ground himself so strangely so long forgotten. The rare luck of his having again just stumbled on the spot made him indifferent to any other question, he would doubtless have devoted more time to the odd accident of his lapse of memory if he hadn't been moved to devote so much to the sweetness the comfort as he felt for the future that this accident itself had helped to keep fresh. It had never entered into his plan that any one should know, and mainly for the reason that it wasn't in him to tell any one. That would have been impossible for nothing but the amusement of a cold world would have waited on it. Since however a mysterious fate had opened his mouth betimes in spite of him he would count that a compensation and profit by it to the utmost. That the right person *should* know tempered the asperity of his secret more even than his shyness had permitted him to imagine and May Bartram was clearly right, because—well because there she was. Her knowledge simply settled it, he would have been sure enough by this time had she been wrong. There was that in his situation, no doubt that disposed him too much to see her as a mere confidant taking all her light for him from the fact—the fact only—of her interest in his predicament from her mercy, sympathy seriousness her consent not to regard him as the funniest of the funny. Aware, in fine, that her price for him was just in her giving him this constant sense of his being admirably spared he was careful to remember that she had also a life of her own with things that might happen to *her* things that in friendship one should likewise take account of. Something fairly remarkable came to pass with

him for that matter in this connexion—something represented by a certain passage of his consciousness, in the suddenest way from one extreme to the other.

He had thought himself so long as nobody knew the most disinterested person in the world carrying his concentrated burden his perpetual suspense ever so quietly holding his tongue about it giving others no glimpse of it nor of its effect upon his life asking of them no allowance and only making on his side all those that were asked. He hadn't disturbed people with the queerness of their having to know a haunted man though he had had moments of rather special temptation on hearing them say they were forsooth unsettled. If they were as unsettled as he was—he who had never been settled for an hour in his life—they would know what it meant. Yet it wasn't all the same for him to make them and he listened to them civilly enough. This was why he had such good—though possibly such rather colourless—manners, this was why above all he could regard himself in a greedy world as decently—as in fact perhaps even a little sublimely—unselfish. Our point is accordingly that he valued this character quite sufficiently to measure his present danger of letting it lapse against which he promised himself to be much on his guard. He was quite ready none the less to be selfish just a little since surely no more charming occasion for it had come to him.

Just a little in a word was just as much as Miss Bartam taking one day with another would let him. He never would be in the least coercive and would keep well before him the lines on which consideration for her—the very highest—ought to proceed. He would thoroughly establish the heads under which her affairs her requirements, her peculiarities—he went so far as to give them the latitude of that name—would come into their intercourse. All this naturally was a sign of how much he took the intercourse itself for granted. There was nothing more to be done about *that*. It simply existed had sprung into being with her first penetrating question to him in the autumn light there at Weatherend. The real form it should have taken on the basis that stood out large was the form of their marrying. But the devil in this was that the very basis itself put marrying out of the question. His conviction his apprehension his obsession, in short wasn't a privilege he could invite a woman to share and that consequence of it was precisely what was the matter with him. Something or other lay in wait for him amid the twists and the turns of the months and the years like a crouching beast in the jungle. It signified little whether the crouching beast were destined to slay him or to be slain. The definite point was the inevitable spring of the creature and the definite lesson from that was that a man of feeling didn't cause himself to be accompanied by a lady.

on a tiger hunt. Such was the image under which he had ended by figuring his life.

They had at first none the less in the scattered hours spent together made no allusion to that view of it, which was a sign he was handsomely alert to give that he didn't expect that he in fact didn't care, always to be talking about it. Such a feature in one's outlook was really like a hump on one's back. The difference it made every minute of the day existed quite independently of discussion. One discussed of course *like* a hunchback for there was always, if nothing else, the hunchback face. That remained and she was watching him but people watched best as a general thing in silence, so that such would be predominantly the manner of their vigil. Yet he didn't want at the same time to be tense and solemn. Tense and solemn was what he imagined he too much showed for with other people. The thing to be with the one person who knew, was easy and natural—to make the reference rather than be seeming to avoid it to avoid it rather than be seeming to make it and to keep it, in any case familiar facetious even rather than pedantic and portentous. Some such consideration as the latter was doubtless in his mind for instance when he wrote pleasantly to Miss Bartiam that perhaps the great thing he had so long felt as in the lap of the gods was no more than this circumstance which touched him so nearly of her acquiring a house in London. It was the first allusion they had yet again made, needing any other hitherto so little but when she replied, after having given him the news that she was by no means satisfied with such a trifle as the climax to so special a suspense she almost set him wondering if she hadn't even a larger conception of singularity for him than he had for himself. He was at all events destined to become aware little by little, as time went by that she was all the while looking at his life judging it, measuring it in the light of the thing she knew which grew to be at last with the consecration of the years never mentioned between them save as the real truth about him. That had always been his own form of reference to it but she adopted the form so quietly that, looking back at the end of a period he knew there was no moment at which it was traceable that she had as he might say got inside his idea or exchanged the attitude of beautifully indulging for that of still more beautifully believing him.

It was always open to him to accuse her of seeing him but as the most harmless of maniacs and this in the long run—since it covered so much ground—was his easiest description of their friendship. He had a screw loose for her but she liked him in spite of it and was practically against the rest of the world his kind wise keeper unremunerated but fairly amused and, in the absence of other near ties

not disreputably occupied. The rest of the world of course thought him queer but she she only knew how and above all why queer which was precisely what enabled her to dispose the concealing veil in the right folds. She took his gaiety from him—since it had to pass with them for gaiety—as she took everything else but she certainly so far justified by her unerring touch his finer sense of the degree to which he had ended by convincing her. *She* at least never spoke of the secret of his life except as the real truth about you and she had in fact a wonderful way of making it seem as such the secret of her own life too. That was in fine how he so constantly felt her as allowing for him he couldn't on the whole call it anything else. He allowed himself but she exactly, allowed still more partly because better placed for a sight of the matter she traced his unhappy perversion through reaches of its course into which he could scarce follow it. He knew how he felt but besides knowing that she knew how he *looked* as well he knew each of the things of importance he was insidiously kept from doing but she could add up the amount they made understand how much with a lighter weight on his spirit he might have done and thereby established how clever as he was he fell short. Above all she was in the secret of the difference between the forms he went through—those of his little office under Government those of caring for his modest patrimony for his library, for his garden in the country for the people in London whose invitations he accepted and repaid—and the detachment that reigned beneath them and that made of all behaviour all that could in the least be called behaviour a long act of dissimulation. What it had come to was that he wore a mask painted with the social simper out of the eye holes of which there looked eyes of an expression not in the least matching the other features. Thus the stupid world even after years had never more than half discovered. It was only Mary Bartiam who had and she achieved, by an art indescribable the feat of at once—or perhaps it was only alternately—meeting the eyes from in front and mingling her own vision as from over his shoulder with their peep through the apertures.

So while they grew older together she did watch with him, and so she let this association give shape and colour to her own existence. Beneath *her* forms as well detachment had learned to sit, and behaviour had become for her in the social sense a false account of herself. There was but one account of her that would have been true all the while and that she could give straight to nobody least of all to John Marcher. Her whole attitude was a virtual statement but the perception of that only seemed called to take its place for him as one of the many things necessarily crowded out of his consciousness. If she had

moreover like himself to make sacrifices to their real truth it was to be granted that her compensation might have affected her as more prompt and more natural. They had long periods in this London time during which when they were together a stranger might have listened to them without in the least pricking up his ears; on the other hand the real truth was equally liable at any moment to rise to the surface and the auditor would then have wondered indeed what they were talking about. They had from an early hour made up their mind that society was, luckily, unintelligent and the margin allowed them by this had fairly become one of their commonplaces. Yet there were still moments when the situation turned almost fresh—usually under the effect of some expression drawn from herself. Her expressions doubtless repeated themselves but her intervals were generous. What saves us, you know, is that we answer so completely to so usual an appearance that of the man and woman whose friendship has become such a daily habit—or almost—as to be at last indispensable. That for instance was a remark she had frequently enough had occasion to make though she had given it at different times different developments. What we are especially concerned with is the turn it happened to take from her one afternoon when he had come to see her in honour of her birthday. This anniversary had fallen on a Sunday at a season of thick fog and general outward gloom but he had brought her his customary offering having known her now long enough to have established a hundred small traditions. It was one of his proofs to himself the present he made her on her birthday that he hadn't sunk into real selfishness. It was mostly nothing more than a small trinket but it was always fine of its kind, and he was regularly careful to pay for it more than he thought he could afford. Our habit saves you at least don't you see? because it makes you after all for the vulgar indistinguishable from other men. What's the most inveterate mark of men in general? Why the capacity to spend endless time with dull women—to spend it I won't say without being bored but without minding that they are, without being driven off at a tangent by it which comes to the same thing. I'm your dull woman, a part of the daily bread for which you pray at church. That covers your tracks more than anything.

And what covers yours? asked Marcher, whom his dull woman could mostly to this extent amuse.

I see of course what you mean by your saving me in this way and that so far as other people are concerned—I've seen it all along. Only what is it that saves *you*? I often think, you know of that.

She looked as if she sometimes thought of that too but rather in a different way. Where other people, you mean, are concerned?

Well you're really so in with me you know—as a sort of result of my being so in with yourself. I mean of my having such an immense regard for you being so tremendously mindful of all you've done for me. I sometimes ask myself if it's quite fair. Fair I mean to have so involved and—since one may say it—interested you. I almost feel as if you hadn't really had time to do anything else.

Anything else but be interested? she asked. Ah what else does one ever want to be? If I've been watching with you as we long ago agreed I was to do watchings always in itself an absorption.

Oh certainly. John Marcher said if you hadn't had your curiosity—! Only doesn't it sometimes come to you as time goes on that your curiosity isn't being particularly repaid?

May Bartram had a pause. Do you ask that by any chance because you feel at all that yours isn't? I mean because you have to wait so long.

Oh he understood what she meant! For the thing to happen that never does happen? For the best to jump out? No. I'm just where I was about it. It isn't a matter as to which I can *choose*. I can decide for a change. It isn't one as to which there *can* be a change. It's in the lap of the gods. One's in the hands of one's law—there one is. As to the form the law will take the way it will operate that's its own affair.

Yes. Miss Bartram replied of course one's fates coming of course it *has* come in its own form and its own way, all the while. Only you know the form and the way in your case were to have been—well something so exceptional and as one may say so particularly *your* own.

Something in this made him look at her with suspicion. You say were to *have* been as if in your heart you had begun to doubt.

Oh! she vaguely protested.

As if you believed he went on, that nothing will now take place.

She shook her head slowly but rather inscrutably. You're far from my thought.

He continued to look at her. What then is the matter with you?

Well she said after another wait the matter with me is simply that I'm more sure than ever my curiosity as you call it will be but too well repaid.

They were frankly grave now he had got up from his seat, had turned once more about the little drawing room to which year after year he brought his inevitable topic in which he had as he might have said, tasted their intimate community with every sauce where every object was as familiar to him as the things of his own house and the very carpets were worn with his fitful walk very much as the desks in old counting houses are worn by the elbows of generations of clerks. The generations

of his nervous moods had been at work there and the place was the written history of his whole middle life. Under the impression of what his friend had just said he knew himself for some reason more aware of these things, which made him after a moment stop again before her. Is it possible that you've grown afraid?

Afraid? He thought, as she repeated the word that his question had made her, a little, change colour, so that lest he should have touched on a truth he explained very kindly. You remember that that was what you asked me long ago—that first day at Weatherend.

Oh yes and you told me you didn't know—that I was to see for myself. We've said little about it since even in so long a time.

Precisely, Marcher interposed—quite as if it were too delicate a matter for us to make free with. Quite as if we might find, on pressure that I *am* afraid. For then he said we shouldn't, should we? quite know what to do.

She had for the time no answer to this question. There have been days when I thought you were. Only, of course she added there have been days when we have thought almost anything.

Everything. Oh! Marcher softly groaned as with a gasp half spent, at the face more uncovered just then than it had been for a long while of the imagination always with them. It had always had its incalculable moments of glaring out quite as with the very eyes of the very Beast and, used as he was to them they could still draw from him the tribute of a sigh that rose from the depths of his being. All they had thought first and last rolled over him the past seemed to have been reduced to mere barren speculation. This in fact was what the place had just struck him as so full of—the simplification of everything but the state of suspense. That remained only by seeming to hang in the void surrounding it. Even his original fear if fear it had been had lost itself in the desert. I judge however he continued that you see I'm not afraid now.

What I see as I make it out, is that you've achieved something almost unprecedented in the way of getting used to danger. Living with it so long and so closely you've lost your sense of it, you know it's there but you're indifferent and you cease even, as of old, to have to whistle in the dark. Considering what the danger is. May Bartram wound up, I'm bound to say I don't think your attitude could well be surpassed.

John Marcher faintly smiled. It's heroic?

Certainly—call it that.

It was what he would have liked indeed to call it. I *am* then a man of courage?

That's what you were to show me.

He still however, wondered. But doesn't the

man of courage know what he's afraid of—or not afraid of? I don't know *that* you see I don't focus it. I can't name it. I only know I'm exposed.

Yes but exposed—how shall I say?—so directly. So intimately. That's surely enough.

Enough to make you feel then—as what we may call the end and the upshot of our watch—that I'm not afraid?

You're not afraid. But it isn't she said the end of our watch. That is it isn't the end of yours. You've everything still to see.

Then why haven't you? he asked. He had had, all along today, the sense of her keeping something back and he still had it. As this was his first impression of that it quite made a date. The case was the more marked as she didn't at first answer which in turn made him go on. You know something I don't. Then his voice for that of a man of courage trembled a little. You know what's to happen. Her silence with the face she showed was almost a confession—it made him sure. You know and you're afraid to tell me. It's so bad that you're afraid I'll find out.

All this might be true for she did look as if unexpectedly to her he had crossed some mystic line that she had secretly drawn round her. Yet she might after all not have worried and the real climax was that he himself at all events needn't. You'll never find out.

### III

It was all to have made, none the less, as I have said a date, which came out in the fact that again and again even after long intervals other things that passed between them wore in relation to this hour but the character of recalls and results. Its immediate effect had been indeed rather to lighten insistence—almost to provoke a reaction as if then topic had dropped by its own weight and as if moreover for that matter Marcher had been visited by one of his occasional warnings against egotism. He had kept up he felt and very decently on the whole, his consciousness of the importance of not being selfish and it was true that he had never sinned in that direction without promptly enough trying to press the scales the other way. He often repaired his fault the season permitting by inviting his friend to accompany him to the opera and it not infrequently thus happened that to show he didn't wish her to have but one sort of food for her mind he was the cause of her appearing there with him a dozen nights in the month. It even happened that seeing her home at such times he occasionally went in with her to finish as he called it the evening and the better to make his point, sat down to the frugal but always careful little supper that awaited his pleasure. His point was made,

he thought by his not eternally insisting with her on himself made for instance at such hours when it befell that her piano at hand and each of them familiar with it they went over passages of the opera together. It chanced to be on one of these occasions however that he reminded her of her not having answered a certain question he had put to her during the talk that had taken place between them on her last birthday. What is it that saves *you*?—saved her he meant from that appearance of variation from the usual human type. If he had practically escaped remark as she pretended by doing in the most important particular what most men do—find the answer to life in patching up an alliance of a sort with a woman no better than himself—how had she escaped it, and how could the alliance such as it was since they must suppose it had been more or less noticed, have failed to make her rather positively talked about?

I never said, May Bartram replied that it hadn't made me a good deal talked about.

Ah well then you're not saved.

It hasn't been a question for me. If you've had your woman I've had she said my man.

And you mean that makes you all right?

Oh it was always as if there were so much to say! I don't know why it shouldn't make me—humanly which is what we're speaking of—as right as it makes you.

I see. Marcher returned. Humanly, no doubt, as showing that you're living for something. Not, that is, just for me and my secret.

May Bartram smiled. I don't pretend it exactly shows that I'm not living for you. It's my intimacy with you that's in question.

He laughed as he saw what she meant. Yes but since as you say, I'm only so far as people make out, ordinary, you're—aren't you?—no more than ordinary either. You help me to pass for a man like another. So if I *am* as I understand you you're not compromised. Is that it?

She had another of her waits, but she spoke clearly enough. That's it. It's all that concerns me—to help you to pass for a man like another.

He was careful to acknowledge the remark handsomely. How kind how beautiful, you are to me! How shall I ever repay you?

She had her last grave pause as if there might be a choice of ways. But she chose. By going on as you are.

It was into this going on as he was that they relapsed and really for so long a time that the day inevitably came for a further sounding of their depths. These depths constantly bided over by a structure firm enough in spite of its lightness and of its occasional oscillation in the somewhat vertiginous air, invited on occasion, in the interest of their

nerves a dropping of the plummet and a measurement of the abyss. A difference had been made moreover once for all by the fact that she had all the while not appeared to feel the need of rebutting his charge of an idea within her that she didn't dare to express—a charge uttered just before one of the fullest of their later discussions ended. It had come up for him then that she knew something and that what she knew was bad—too bad to tell him. When he had spoken of it as visibly so bad that she was afraid he might find it out her reply had left the matter too equivocal to be let alone and yet for Marcher's special sensibility almost too formidable again to touch. He circled about it at a distance that alternately narrowed and widened and that still wasn't much affected by the consciousness in him that there was nothing she could know after all any better than he did. She had no source of knowledge he hadn't equally—except of course that she might have finer nerves. That was what women had where they were interested: they made out things, where people were concerned that the people often couldn't have made out for themselves. Their nerves, their sensibility, their imagination were conductors and revealers, and the beauty of May Bartram was in particular that she had given herself so to his case. He felt in these days what, oddly enough he had never felt before, the growth of a dread of losing her by some catastrophe—some catastrophe that yet wouldn't at all be *the* catastrophe partly because she had almost of a sudden begun to strike him as more useful to him than ever yet, and partly by reason of an appearance of uncertainty in her health coincident and equally new. It was characteristic of the inner detachment he had hitherto so successfully cultivated and to which our whole account of him is a reference, it was characteristic that his complications, such as they were, had never yet seemed so as at this crisis to thicken about him even to the point of making him ask himself if he were, by any chance, of a truth within sight or sound within touch or reach within the immediate jurisdiction of the thing that waited.

When the day came as come it had to, that his friend confessed to him her fear of a deep disorder in her blood he felt somehow the shadow of a change and the chill of a shock. He immediately began to imagine aggravations and disasters and above all to think of her peril as the direct menace for himself of personal privation. This indeed gave him one of those partial recoveries of equanimity that were agreeable to him—it showed him that what was still first in his mind was the loss she herself might suffer. What if she should have to die before knowing before seeing—? It would have been brutal in the early stages of her trouble,

to put that question to her but it had immediately sounded for him to his own concern and the possibility was what most made him sorry for her. If she did know—moreover in the sense of her having had some—what should he think?—mystical irresistible light, this would make the matter not better but worse inasmuch as her original adoption of his own curiosity had quite become the basis of her life. She had been living to see what would *be* to be seen and it would quite lacerate her to have to give up before the accomplishment of the vision. These reflexions as I say quickened his generosity yet make them as he might he saw himself with the lapse of the period more and more disconcerted. It lapsed for him with a strange steady sweep, and the oddest oddity was that it gave him independently of the threat of much inconvenience, almost the only positive surprise his career if career it could be called, had yet offered him. She kept the house as she had never done he had to go to her to see her—she could meet him nowhere now though there was scarce a corner of their loved old London in which she hadn't in the past at one time or another, done so and he found her always seated by her fire in the deep old fashioned chair she was less and less able to leave. He had been struck one day after an absence exceeding his usual measure with her suddenly looking much older to him than he had ever thought of her being then he recognised that the suddenness was all on his side—he had just simply and suddenly noticed. She looked older because inevitably after so many years she *was* old, or almost which was of course true in still greater measure of her companion. If she was old or almost John Marcher assuredly was and yet it was her showing of the lesson not his own that brought the truth home to him. His surprises began here when once they had begun they multiplied they came rather with a rush it was as if in the oddest way in the world they had all been kept back sown in a thick cluster for the late afternoon of life the time at which for people in general the unexpected has died out.

One of them was that he should have caught himself—for he *had* so done—*really* wondering if the great accident would take form now as nothing more than his being condemned to see this charming woman this admirable friend pass away from him. He had never so unreservedly qualified her as while confronted in thought with such a possibility in spite of which there was small doubt for him that as an answer to his long middle the mere effacement of even so fine a feature of his situation would be an abject anticlimax. It would represent as connected with his past attitude, a drop of dignity under the shadow of which his existence could only become the most grotesque of failures. He had been

far from holding it a failure—long as he had waited for the appearance that was to make it a success. He had waited for quite another thing not for such a thing as that. The breath of his good faith came short however as he recognised how long he had waited or how long at least his companion had. That she at all events might be recorded as having waited in vain—this affected him sharply and all the more because of his at first having done little more than amuse himself with the idea. It grew more grave as the gravity of her condition grew and the state of mind it produced in him which he himself ended by watching as if it had been some definite disfigurement of his outer person, may pass for another of his surprises. This conjoined itself still with another the really stupefying consciousness of a question that he would have allowed to shape itself had he dared. What did everything mean—what that is, did *she* mean she and her vain waiting and her probable death and the soundless admonition of it all—unless that at this time of day it was simply it was overwhelmingly too late? He had never at any stage of his queer consciousness admitted the whisper of such a correction he had never till within these last few months been so false to his conviction as not to hold that what was to come to him had time whether *he* struck himself as having it or not. That at last at last he certainly hadn't it to speak of or had it but in the scantiest measure—such soon enough as things went with him became the inference with which his old obsession had to reckon and this it was not helped to do by the more and more confirmed appearance that the great vagueness casting the long shadow in which he had lived had to attest itself almost no margin left. Since it was in Time that he was to have met his fate, so it was in Time that his fate was to have acted and as he waked up to the sense of no longer being young which was exactly the sense of being stale just as that in turn was the sense of being weak he waked up to another matter beside. It all hung together, they were subject he and the great vagueness to an equal and indivisible law. When the possibilities themselves had accordingly turned stale, when the secret of the gods had grown faint had perhaps even quite evaporated that, and that only, was failure. It wouldn't have been failure to be bankrupt dishonoured pilloried hanged, it was failure not to be anything. And so in the dark valley into which his path had taken its unlooked-for twist he wondered not a little as he groped. He didn't care what awful crash might overtake him, with what ignominy or what monstrosity he might yet be associated—since he wasn't after all too utterly old to suffer—if it would only be decently proportionate to the posture he had kept all his life in the threatened presence of it.



He had but one desire left—that he shouldn't have been sold

IV

Then it was that, one afternoon while the spring of the year was young and new she met all in her own way his frankest betrayal of these alarms. He had gone in late to see her but evening hadn't settled and she was presented to him in that long fresh light of waning April days which affects us often with a sadness sharper than the greyest hours of autumn. The week had been warm the spring was supposed to have begun early and May Bartram sat for the first time in the year without a fire—a fact that, to Marcher's sense gave the scene of which she formed part a smooth and ultimate look—an air of knowing in its immaculate order and cold meaningless cheer that it would never see a fire again. Her own aspect—he could scarce have said why—intensified this note. Almost as white as wax with the marks and signs in her face as numerous and as fine as if they had been etched by a needle with soft white draperies relieved by a faded green scarf on the delicate tone of which the years had further refined she was the picture of a serene and exquisite but impenetrable sphinx whose head or indeed all whose person might have been powdered with silver. She was a sphinx yet with her white petals and green fronds she might have been a lily too—only an artificial lily, wonderfully imitated and constantly kept without dust or stain though not exempt from a slight droop and a complexity of faint creases under some clear glass bell. The perfection of household care, of high polish and finish always reigned in her rooms but they now looked most as if everything had been wound up tucked in put away so that she might sit with folded hands and with nothing more to do. She was out of it to Marcher's vision, her work was over she communicated with him as across some gulf or from some island of rest that she had already reached, and it made him feel strangely abandoned. Was it—or rather wasn't it—that if for so long she had been watching with him the answer to their question must have swum into her ken and taken on its name so that her occupation was verily gone? He had as much as charged her with this in saying to her many months before that she even then knew something she was keeping from him. It was a point he had never since ventured to press, vaguely fearing as he did that it might become a difference perhaps a disagreement between them. He had in this later time turned nervous, which was what he in all the other years had never been, and the oddity was that his nervousness should have waited till he had begun to doubt, should have held off so long as he

was sure. There was something it seemed to him that the wrong word would bring down on his head something that would so at least ease off his tension. But he wanted not to speak the wrong word that would make everything ugly. He wanted the knowledge he lacked to drop on him if drop it could by its own august weight. If she was to forsake him it was surely for her to take leave. This was why he didn't directly ask her again what she knew but it was also why approaching the matter from another side he said to her in the course of his visit: "What do you regard as the very worst that at this time of day *can* happen to me?"

He had asked her that in the past often enough they had with the odd irregular rhythm of their intensities and avoidances exchanged ideas about it and then had seen the ideas washed away by cool intervals washed like figures traced in sea sand. It had ever been the mark of their talk that the oldest allusions in it required but a little dismissal and reaction to come out again sounding for the hour as new. She could thus at present meet his enquiry quite freshly and patiently. Oh yes I've repeatedly thought only it always seemed to me of old that I couldn't quite make up my mind. I thought of dreadful things between which it was difficult to choose and so must you have done.

Rather! I feel now as if I had scarce done anything else. I appear to myself to have spent my life in thinking of nothing *but* dreadful things. A great many of them I've at different times named to you, but there were others I couldn't name.

They were too too dreadful?

Too too dreadful—some of them.

She looked at him a minute and there came to him as he met it an inconsequent sense that her eyes when one got their full clearness were still as beautiful as they had been in youth only beautiful with a strange cold light—a light that somehow was a part of the effect if it wasn't rather a part of the cause of the pale hard sweetness of the season and the hour. And yet she said at last, there are horrors we've mentioned.

It deepened the strangeness to see her, as such a figure in such a picture, talk of horrors but she was to do in a few minutes something stranger yet—though even of this he was to take the full measure but afterwards—and the note of it already trembled. It was for the matter of that one of the signs that her eyes were having again the high flicker of their prime. He had to admit however what she said. Oh yes, there were times when we did go far. He caught himself in the act of speaking as if it all were over. Well, he wished it were and the consummation depended for him clearly more and more on his friend.

But she had now a soft smile. Oh far—!

It was oddly ironic. Do you mean you're prepared to go further?

She was frail and ancient and charming as she continued to look at him yet it was rather as if she had lost the thread. Do you consider that we went far?

Why I thought it the point you were just making—that we *had* looked most things in the face

Including each other? She still smiled. But you're quite right. We've had together great imaginations, often great fears, but some of them have been unspoken.

Then the worst—we haven't faced that I *could* face it. I believe if I knew what you think it I feel, he explained, as if I had lost my power to conceive such things. And he wondered if he looked as blank as he sounded. It's spent.

Then why do you assume, she asked, that mine isn't?

Because you've given me signs to the contrary. It isn't a question for you of conceiving, imagining, comparing. It isn't a question now of choosing. At last he came out with it. You know something I don't. You've shown me that before.

These last words had affected her, he made out in a moment exceedingly, and she spoke with firmness. I've shown you my dear, nothing.

He shook his head. You can't hide it.

Oh, oh! May Bartram sounded over what she couldn't hide. It was almost a smothered groan.

You admitted it months ago when I spoke of it to you as of something you were afraid I should find out. Your answer was that I couldn't, that I wouldn't, and I don't pretend I have. But you had something therefore in mind, and I now see how it must have been. How it still is the possibility that, of all possibilities, has settled itself for you as the worst. This, he went on, is why I appeal to you. I'm only afraid of ignorance today—I'm not afraid of knowledge. And then as for a while she said nothing. What makes me sure is that I see in your face and feel here in this air and amid these appearances that you're out of it. You've done. You've had your experience. You leave me to my fate.

Well, she listened motionless and white in her chair as on a decision to be made, so that her manner was fairly an avowal, though still, with a small fine inner stiffness, an imperfect surrender. It *would* be the worst, she finally let herself say. I mean the thing I've never said.

It hushed him a moment. More monstrous than all the monstrosities we've named?

More monstrous. Isn't that what you sufficiently express, she asked, in calling it the worst?

Marcher thought. Assuredly—if you mean, as I do, something that includes all the loss and all the shame that are thinkable.

It would if it *should* happen, said May Bartram. What were speaking of? Remember is only my idea.

It's your belief. Marcher returned. That's enough for me. I feel your beliefs are right. Therefore if having this one you give me no more light on it, you abandon me.

No, no! she repeated. I'm with you—don't you see?—still. And as to make it more vivid to him she rose from her chair—a movement she seldom risked in these days—and showed herself all draped and all soft in her fairness and slowness. I haven't forsaken you.

It was really in its effort against weakness a generous assurance and had the success of the impulse not happily, been great. It would have touched him to pain more than to pleasure. But the cold charm in her eyes had spread as she hovered before him to all the rest of her person so that it was for the minute almost a recovery of youth. He couldn't pity her for that he could only take her as she showed—as capable even yet of helping him. It was as if at the same time her light might at any instant go out wherefore he must make the most of it. There passed before him with intensity the three or four things he wanted most to know but the question that came of itself to his lips really covered the others. Then tell me if I shall consciously suffer.

She promptly shook her head. Never!

It confirmed the authority he imputed to her and it produced on him an extraordinary effect. Well, what's better than that? Do you call that the worst?

You think nothing is better? she asked.

She seemed to mean something so special that he again sharply wondered though still with the dawn of a prospect of relief. Why not if one doesn't *know*? After which as their eyes over his question met in a silence, the dawn deepened and something to his purpose came prodigiously out of her very face. His own as he took it in suddenly flushed to the forehead and he gasped with the force of a perception to which on the instant everything fitted. The sound of his gasp filled the air then he became articulate. I see—if I don't suffer!

In her own look, however, was doubt. You see what?

Why what you mean—what you've always meant.

She again shook her head. What I mean isn't what I've always meant. It's different.

It's something new?

She hung back from it a little. Something new. It's not what you think. I see what you think.

His divination drew breath then only her correction might be wrong. It isn't that I *am* a block-



head? he asked between faintness and guess  
It isn't that it's all a mistake?

A mistake? she pityingly echoed *That* possibility for her he saw, would be monstrous and if she guaranteed him the immunity from pain it would accordingly not be what she had in mind.

Oh no she declared it's nothing of that sort. You've been right.

Yet he couldn't help asking himself if she weren't, thus pressed speaking but to save him. It seemed to him he should be most in a hole if his history should prove all a platitude. Are you telling me the truth so that I shan't have been a bigger idiot than I can bear to know? *I haven't* lived with a vain imagination in the most besotted illusion? *I haven't* waited but to see the door shut in my face?

She shook her head again. However the case stands *that* isn't the truth. Whatever the reality it is a reality. The door isn't shut. The doors open, said May Bartram.

Then something's to come?

She waited once again always with her cold sweet eyes on him. It's never too late. She had with her gliding step diminished the distance between them, and she stood nearer to him close to him a minute as if still charged with the unspoken. Her movement might have been for some finer emphasis of what she was at once hesitating and deciding to say. He had been standing by the chimney piece fireless and sparsely adorned a small perfect old French clock and two morsels of 1057 Dresden constituting all its furniture and her hand grasped the shelf while she kept him waiting grasped it a little as for support and encouragement. She only kept him waiting however that is he only waited. It had become suddenly from her movement and attitude beautiful and vivid to him that she had something more to give him her wasted face delicately shone with it—it glittered almost as with the white lustre of silver in her expression. She was right incontestably for what he saw in her face was the truth and strangely without consequence while their talk of it as dreadful was still in the air she appeared to present it as inordinately soft. This, prompting his wonderment made him but gape the more gratefully for her revelation so that they continued for some minutes silent her face shining at him her contact imponderably pressing and his stare all kind but all expectant. The end none the less was that what he had expected failed to come to him. Something else took place instead which seemed to consist at first in the mere closing of her eyes. She gave way at the same instant to a slow fine shudder and though he remained staring—though he stared in fact but the harder—turned off and regained her chair. It was the end of what she had been intending but it left him thinking only of that.

Well you don't say—?

She had touched in her passage a bell near the chimney and had sunk back strangely pale. I'm afraid I'm too ill.

Too ill to tell me? It sprang up sharp to him and almost to his lips the fear she might die without giving him light. He checked himself in time from so expressing his question but she answered as if she had heard the words.

Don't you know—now?

Now—? She had spoken as if some difference had been made within the moment. But her maid, quickly obedient to her bell, was already with them.

I know nothing. And he was afterwards to say to himself that he must have spoken with odious impatience such an impatience as to show that supremely disconcerted he washed his hands of the whole question.

Oh! said May Bartram.

Are you in pain? he asked as the woman went to her.

No said May Bartram.

Her maid, who had put an arm round her as if to take her to her room fixed on him eyes that appealingly contradicted her in spite of which however he showed once more his mystification.

What then has happened?

She was once more with her companion's help on her feet and feeling withdrawal imposed on him he had blankly found his hat and gloves and had reached the door. Yet he waited for her answer.

What *was* to she said.

# V

He came back the next day but she was then unable to see him and as it was literally the first time this had occurred in the long stretch of their acquaintance he turned away defeated and sore, almost angry—or feeling at least that such a break in their custom was really the beginning of the end—and wandered alone with his thoughts especially with the one he was least able to keep down. She was dying and he would lose her she was dying and his life would end. He stopped in the Park into which he had passed and stared before him at his recurrent doubt. Away from her the doubt pressed again in her presence he had believed her but as he felt his loneliness he threw himself into the explanation that nearest at hand, had most of a miserable warmth for him and least of a cold torment. She had deceived him to save him—to put him off with something in which he should be able to rest. What could the thing that was to happen to him be after all but just this thing that had begun to happen? Her dying, her death his consequent solitude—*that* was what he had figured as the Beast in the Jungle that was what had been in the lap of the gods. He

had had her word for it as he left her—what else on earth could she have meant? It wasn't a thing of a monstrous order not a fate rare and distinguished not a stroke of fortune that overwhelmed and immortalised, it had only the stamp of the common doom. But poor Marcher at this hour judged the common doom sufficient. It would serve his turn, and even as the consummation of infinite waiting he would bend his pride to accept it. He sat down on a bench in the twilight. He hadn't been a fool. Something had *been* as she had said to come. Before he rose indeed it had quite struck him that the final fact really matched with the long avenue through which he had had to reach it. As sharing his suspense and as giving himself all giving her life, to bring it to an end, she had come with him every step of the way. He had lived by her aid and to leave her behind would be cruelly damnably to miss her. What could be more overwhelming than that?

Well he was to know within the week for though she kept him a while at bay left him restless and wretched during a series of days on each of which he asked about her only again to have to turn away she ended his trial by receiving him where she had always received him. Yet she had been brought out at some hazard into the presence of so many of the things that were, consciously vainly half their past and there was scant service left in the gentleness of her mere desire all too visible to check his obsession and wind up his long trouble. That was clearly what she wanted the one thing more for her own peace while she could still put out her hand. He was so affected by her state that once seated by her chair he was moved to let everything go, it was she herself therefore who brought him back took up again before she dismissed him, her last word of the other time. She showed how she wished to leave their business in order. I'm not sure you understood. You've nothing to wait for more. It *has* come.

Oh how he looked at her! Really?

Really.

The thing that as you said *was* to?

The thing that we began in our youth to watch for.

Face to face with her once more he believed her it was a claim to which he had so abjectedly little to oppose. You mean that it has come as a positive definite occurrence, with a name and a date?

Positive. Definite. I don't know about the name, but oh with a date!

He found himself again too helplessly at sea. But come in the night—come and passed me by?

May Bartram had her strange faint smile. Oh no it hasn't passed you by!

But if I haven't been aware of it and it hasn't touched me—?

Ah you not being aware of it—and she seemed to hesitate an instant to deal with this—your not being aware of it is the strangeness *in* the strangeness. It's the wonder of the wonder. She spoke as with the softness almost of a sick child, yet now at last, at the end of all with the perfect straightness of a sibyl. She visibly knew that she knew and the effect on him was of something co-ordinate in its high character with the law that had ruled him. It was the true voice of the law so on her lips would the law itself have sounded. It *has* touched you she went on. It has done its office. It has made you all its own.

So utterly without my knowing it?

So utterly without your knowing it. His hand as he leaned to her was on the arm of her chair and dimly smiling always now she placed her own on it. It's enough if I know it.

Oh! he confusedly breathed as she herself of late so often had done.

What I long ago said is true. You'll never know now and I think you ought to be content. You've *had* it said May Bartram.

But had what?

Why what was to have marked you out. The proof of your law. It has acted. I'm too glad she then bravely added to have been able to see what it's *not*.

He continued to attach his eyes to her and with the sense that it was all beyond him and that *she* was too he would still have sharply challenged her hadn't he so felt it an abuse of her weakness to do more than take devoutly what she gave him, take it hushed as to a revelation. If he did speak it was out of the foreknowledge of his loneliness to come. If you're glad of what it's not it might then have been worse?

She turned her eyes away she looked straight before her with which after a moment. Well, you know our fears.

He wondered. It's something then we never feared?

On this slowly she turned to him. Did we ever dream, with all our dreams that we should sit and talk of it thus?

He tried for a little to make out that they had but it was as if their dreams numberless enough, were in solution in some thick cold mist through which thought lost itself. It might have been that we couldn't talk?

Well—she did her best for him—not from this side. This you see she said is the *other* side.

I think poor Marcher returned that all sides are the same to me. Then, however, as she gently

shook her head in correction We mightn't as it were have got across—?

To where we are—no We're *here*—she made her weak emphasis

And much good does it do us! was her friend's frank comment

It does us the good it can It does us the good that *it* isn't here Its past Its behind said May Bartram Before— but her voice dropped

He had got up not to tire her but it was hard to combat his yearning She after all told him nothing but that his light had failed—which he knew well enough without her Before—? he blankly echoed

Before you see it was always to *come* That kept it present

Oh I don't care what comes now! Besides Maicher added it seems to me I liked it better present as you say, than I can like it absent with *your* absence

Oh mine!—and her pale hands made light of it

With the absence of everything He had a dreadful sense of standing there before her for—so far as anything but this proved this bottomless drop was concerned—the last time of their life It rested on him with a weight he felt he could scarce bear and this weight it apparently was that still pressed out what remained in him of speakable protest I believe you but I can't begin to pretend I understand *Nothing* for me is past nothing *will* pass till I pass myself which I pray my stars may be as soon as possible Say however he added that I've eaten my cake as you contend to the last crumb—how can the thing I've never felt at all be the thing I was marked out to feel?

She met him perhaps less directly, but she met him unperturbed You take your feelings for granted You were to suffer your fate That was not necessarily to know it

How in the world—when what is such knowledge but suffering?

She looked up at him a while in silence No—you don't understand

I suffer said John Maicher

Don't don't!

How can I help at least *that*?

Don't! May Bartram repeated

She spoke it in a tone so special in spite of her weakness that he stared an instant—stared as if some light, hitherto hidden had shimmered across his vision Darkness again closed over it but the gleam had already become for him an idea Because I haven't the right—?

Don't *know*—when you needn't she mercifully urged You needn't—for we shouldn't

Shouldn't? If he could but know what she meant!

No—it's too much

Too much? he still asked but with a mystification that was the next moment of a sudden to give way Her words if they meant something affected him in this light—the light also of her wasted face—as meaning *all* and the sense of what knowledge had been for herself came over him with a rush which broke through into a question Is it of that then you're dying?

She but watched him gravely at first as to see with this where he was and she might have seen something or feared something that moved her sympathy I would live for you still—if I could Her eyes closed for a little as if, withdrawn into herself she were for a last time tying But I can't! she said as she raised them again to take leave of him

She couldn't indeed, as but too promptly and sharply appeared and he had no vision of her after this that was anything but darkness and doom They had parted for ever in that strange talk access to her chamber of pain rigidly guarded was almost wholly forbidden him he was feeling now moreover in the face of doctors nurses the two or three relatives attracted doubtless by the presumption of what she had to leave how few were the rights, as they were called in such cases that he had to put forward and how odd it might even seem that their intimacy shouldn't have given him more of them The stupidest fourth cousin had more, even though she had been nothing in such a person's life She had been a feature of features in *his* for what else was it to have been so indispensable? Strange beyond saying were the ways of existence baffling for him the anomaly of his lack as he felt it to be, of producible claim A woman might have been as it were everything to him and it might yet present him in no connexion that any one seemed held to recognise If this was the case in these closing weeks it was the case more sharply on the occasion of the last offices rendered in the great grey London cemetery to what had been mortal to what had been precious in his friend The concourse at her grave was not numerous but he saw himself treated as scarce more nearly concerned with it than if there had been a thousand others He was in short from this moment face to face with the fact that he was to profit extraordinarily little by the interest May Bartram had taken in him He couldn't quite have said what he expected but he hadn't surely expected this approach to a double privation Not only had her interest failed him but he seemed to feel himself unattended—and for a reason he couldn't seize—by the distinction, the dignity, the propriety if nothing else of the man markedly bereaved It was as if in the view of society he had not *been* markedly

beleaved as if there still failed some sign or proof of it and as if none the less his character could never be affirmed nor the deficiency ever made up. There were moments as the weeks went by when he would have liked by some almost aggressive act to take his stand on the intimacy of his loss in order that it *might* be questioned and his retort to the relief of his spirit so recorded but the moments of an irritation more helpless followed fast on these the moments during which turning things over with a good conscience but with a bare horizon, he found himself wondering if he oughtn't to have begun so to speak further back.

He found himself wondering indeed at many things and this last speculation had others to keep it company. What could he have done after all in her lifetime without giving them both as it were, away? He couldn't have made known she was watching him for that would have published the superstition of the Beast. This was what closed his mouth now—now that the jungle had been threshed to vacancy and that the Beast had stolen away. It sounded too foolish and too flat the difference for him in this particular the extinction in his life of the element of suspense was such as in fact to surprise him. He could scarce have said what the effect resembled the abrupt cessation the positive prohibition of music perhaps more than anything else in some place all adjusted and all accustomed to sonority and to attention. If he could at any rate have conceived lifting the veil from his image at some moment of the past (what had he done, after all if not lift it to *her*?) so to do this today to talk to people at large of the jungle cleared and confide to them that he now felt it as safe would have been not only to see them listen as to a goodwife's tale but really to hear himself tell one. What it presently came to in truth was that poor Marcher waded through his beaten grass where no life stirred where no breath sounded where no evil eye seemed to gleam from a possible lair, very much as if vaguely looking for the Beast and still more as if acutely missing it. He walked about in an existence that had grown strangely more spacious and stopping fitfully in places where the undergrowth of life struck him as closer asked himself yearningly wondered secretly and sorely if it would have lurked here or there. It would have at all events *sprung*, what was at least complete was his belief in the truth itself of the assurance given him. The change from his old sense to his new was absolute and final what was to happen *had* so absolutely and finally happened that he was as little able to know a fear for his future as to know a hope so absent in short was any question of anything still to come. He was to live entirely with the other question, that of his unidentified past, that

of his having to see his fortune impenetrably muffled and masked.

The torment of this vision became then his occupation he couldn't perhaps have consented to live but for the possibility of guessing. She had told him his friend not to guess she had forbidden him so far as he might, to know and she had even in a sort denied the power in him to learn which were so many things precisely to deprive him of rest. It wasn't that he wanted he argued for fairness that anything past and done should repeat itself it was only that he shouldn't as an anticlimax have been taken sleeping so sound as not to be able to win back by an effort of thought the lost stuff of consciousness. He declared to himself at moments that he would either win it back or have done with consciousness for ever he made this idea his one motive in fine made it so much his passion that none other to compare with it seemed ever to have touched him. The lost stuff of consciousness became thus for him as a stayed or stolen child to an unappeasable father he hunted it up and down very much as if he were knocking at doors and enquiring of the police. This was the spirit in which inevitably he set himself to travel he started on a journey that was to be as long as he could make it it danced before him that as the other side of the globe couldn't possibly have less to say to him it might by a possibility of suggestion have more. Before he quitted London however he made a pilgrimage to May Bartram's grave took his way to it through the endless avenues of the grim suburban metropolis, sought it out in the wilderness of tombs and though he had come but for the renewal of the act of farewell found himself when he had at last stood by it beguiled into long intensities. He stood for an hour, powerless to turn away and yet powerless to penetrate the darkness of death fixing with his eyes her inscribed name and date beating his forehead against the fact of the secret they kept drawing his breath, while he waited as if some sense would in pity of him rise from the stones. He kneeled on the stones however in vain they kept what they concealed and if the face of the tomb did become a face for him it was because her two names became a pair of eyes that didn't know him. He gave them a last long look, but no palest light broke.

## VI

He stayed away after this, for a year he visited the depths of Asia spending himself on scenes of romantic interest, of superlative sanctity but what was present to him everywhere was that for a man who had known what *he* had known the world was vulgar and vain. The state of mind in which he lived for so many years shone out to him, in

reflexion as a light that coloured and refined a light beside which the glow of the East was garish and cheap and thin. The terrible truth was that he had lost—with everything else—a distinction as well the things he saw couldn't help being common when he had become common to look at them. He was simply now one of them himself—he was in the dust without a peg for the sense of difference and there were hours when before the temples of gods and the sepulchres of kings his spirit turned for nobleness of association to the barely discriminated slab in the London suburb. That had become for him and more intensely with time and distance his one witness of a past glory. It was all that was left to him for proof or pride yet the past glories of Pharaohs were nothing to him as he thought of it. Small wonder then that he came back to it on the morrow of his return. He was drawn there this time as irresistibly as the other yet with a confidence almost that was doubtless the effect of the many months that had elapsed. He had lived in spite of himself, into his change of feeling and in wandering over the earth had wandered as might be said from the circumference to the centre of his desert. He had settled to his safety and accepted perforce his extinction, figuring to himself with some colour in the likeness of certain little old men he remembered to have seen of whom, all meagre and wizened as they might look, it was related that they had in their time fought twenty duels or been loved by ten princesses. They indeed had been wondrous for others while he was but wondrous for himself which, however, was exactly the cause of his haste to renew the wonder by getting back as he might put it, into his own presence. That had quickened his steps and checked his delay. If his visit was prompt it was because he had been separated so long from the part of himself that alone he now valued.

It's accordingly not false to say that he reached his goal with a certain elation and stood there again with a certain assurance. The creature beneath the sod *knew* of his rare experience so that strangely now the place had lost for him its mere blankness of expression. It met him in mildness—not as before in mockery—it wore for him the air of conscious greeting that we find after absence, in things that have closely belonged to us and which seem to confess of themselves to the connexion. The plot of ground the graven tablet the tended flowers affected him so as belonging to him that he resembled for the hour a contented landlord reviewing a piece of property. Whatever had happened—well had happened. He had not come back this time with the vanity of that question his former worrying. What *what?* now practically so spent. Yet he would none the less never again so cut himself off from the spot,

he would come back to it every month for if he did nothing else by its aid he at least held up his head. It thus grew for him in the oddest way a positive resource he carried out his idea of periodical returns, which took their place at last among the most inveterate of his habits. What it all amounted to oddly enough was that in his finally so simplified world this garden of death gave him the few square feet of earth on which he could still most live. It was as if being nothing anywhere else for any one nothing even for himself he were just everything here, and if not for a crowd of witnesses or indeed for any witness but John Marcher then by clear right of the register that he could scan like an open page. The open page was the tomb of his friend and *there* were the facts of the past there the truth of his life there the backward reaches in which he could lose himself. He did this from time to time with such effect that he seemed to wander through the old years with his hand in the arm of a companion who was in the most extraordinary manner his other his younger self and to wander, which was more extraordinary yet round and round a third presence—not wandering she but stationary still whose eyes turning with his revolution never ceased to follow him and whose seat was his point so to speak of orientation. Thus in short he settled to live—feeding all on the sense that he once *had* lived and dependent on it not alone for a support but for an identity.

It sufficed him in its way for months and the year elapsed it would doubtless even have carried him further but for an accident superficially slight which moved him quite in another direction with a force beyond any of his impressions of Egypt or of India. It was a thing of the merest chance—the turn, as he afterwards felt of a hair though he was indeed to live to believe that if light hadn't come to him in this particular fashion it would still have come in another. He was to live to believe this. I say, though he was not to live. I may not less definitely mention to do much else. We allow him at any rate the benefit of the conviction, struggling up for him at the end that whatever might have happened or not happened he would have come round of himself to the light. The incident of an autumn day had put the match to the train laid from of old by his misery. With the light before him he knew that even of late his ache had only been smothered. It was strangely drugged but it throbbed at the touch it began to bleed. And the touch, in the event was the face of a fellow mortal. This face one grey afternoon when the leaves were thick in the alleys looked into Marcher's own at the cemetery with an expression like the cut of a blade. He felt it that is so deep down that he winced at the steady thrust. The person who so mutely assaulted him was a figure he

had noticed, on reaching his own goal absorbed by a grave a short distance away a grave apparently fresh so that the emotion of the visitor would probably match it for frankness. This fact alone forbade further attention though during the time he stayed he remained vaguely conscious of his neighbour, a middle aged man apparently in mourning whose bowed back among the clustered monuments and mortuary yews was constantly presented. Marcher's theory that these were elements in contact with which he himself revived, had suffered, on this occasion it may be granted a marked excessive check. The autumn day was dire for him as none had recently been and he rested with a heaviness he had not yet known on the low stone table that bore May Bartram's name. He rested without power to move as if some spring in him some spell vouchsafed had suddenly been broken for ever. If he could have done that moment as he wanted he would simply have stretched himself on the slab that was ready to take him treating it as a place prepared to receive his last sleep. What in all the wide world had he now to keep awake for? He stared before him with the question, and it was then that as one of the cemetery walks passed near him he caught the shock of the face.

His neighbour at the other grave had withdrawn as he himself, with force enough in him would have done by now and was advancing along the path on his way to one of the gates. This brought him close and his pace was slow so that—and all the more as there was a kind of hunger in his look—the two men were for a minute directly confronted. Marcher knew him at once for one of the deeply stricken—a perception so sharp that nothing else in the picture comparatively lived neither his dress his age nor his presumable character and class nothing lived but the deep ravage of the features he showed. He *showed* them—that was the point he was moved, as he passed by some impulse that was either a signal for sympathy or more possibly a challenge to an opposed sorrow. He might already have been aware of our friend might at some previous hour have noticed in him the smooth habit of the scene, with which the state of his own senses so scantily consorted and might thereby have been stirred as by an overt discord. What Marcher was at all events conscious of was in the first place that the image of scarred passion presented to him was conscious too—of something that profaned the air and in the second that, roused, startled, shocked he was yet the next moment looking after it as it went, with envy. The most extraordinary thing that had happened to him—though he had given that name to other matters as well—took place, after his immediate vague stare, as a consequence of this impression. The

stranger passed but the raw glare of his grief remained, making our friend wonder in pity what wrong what wound it expressed what injury not to be healed. What had the man *had* to make him by the loss of it so bleed and yet live?

Something—and this reached him with a pang—that *he* John Marcher hadn't, the proof of which was precisely John Marcher's end. No passion had ever touched him for this was what passion meant he had survived and maundered and pined but where had been *his* deep ravage? The extraordinary thing we speak of was the sudden rush of the result of this question. The sight that had just met his eyes named to him as in letters of quick flame something he had utterly insidiously missed, and what he had missed made these things a team of fire made them mark themselves in an anguish of inward throbs. He had seen *outside* of his life, not learned it within the way a woman was mourned when she had been loved for herself such was the force of his conviction of the meaning of the stranger's face which still flared for him as a smoky torch. It hadn't come to him the knowledge on the wings of experience it had brushed him jostled him upset him with the disrespect of chance, the insolence of accident. Now that the illumination had begun however, it blazed to the zenith and what he presently stood there gazing at was the sounded void of his life. He gazed he drew breath in pain he turned in his dismay and turning he had before him in sharper incision than ever the open page of his story. The name on the table smote him as the passage of his neighbour had done and what it said to him full in the face was that *she* was what he had missed. This was the awful thought the answer to all the past the vision at the dread clearness of which he grew as cold as the stone beneath him. Everything fell together confessed explained overwhelmed leaving him most of all stupefied at the blindness he had cherished. The fate he had been marked for he had met with a vengeance—he had emptied the cup to the lees he had been the man of his time *the* man, to whom nothing on earth was to have happened. That was the rare stroke—that was his visitation. So he saw it as we see in pale horror while the pieces fitted and fitted. So *she* had seen it while he didn't and so she served at this hour to drive the truth home. It was the truth vivid and monstrous that all the while he had waited the wait was itself his portion. This the companion of his vigil had at a given moment made out and she had then offered him the chance to baffle his doom. One's doom however was never baffled and on the day she told him his own had come down she had seen him but stupidly stare at the escape she offered him.

The escape would have been to love her, then

James Thurber

The work of James Thurber has brought delight and pleasure wherever it has appeared and in whatever form. His wonderful drawings of men, women and animals, his fables, his reminiscences of his boyhood days in Ohio, and his short stories have in common an amazingly astute perception, a sense of the comedy and tragedy of modern life and an awareness which make him far more than a humorist. Thurber's work is a superb commentary upon our current scene and there underlies the laughter which he produces a gain consciousness of the nature of our world which could, if his touch were not so perfectly adjusted and controlled, turn our laughter into tears.

The aspect of Henry James's story which Thurber has chosen to parody is of course his style. In the discussion of James's story some of the reasons for James's style were suggested and it is naturally a falsification of James's purpose as an artist to suggest that his style stands alone without harmonious relationship to the subject matter. Yet James's syntax has certain formal patterns which can be duplicated in isolation and Thurber has here seized upon them with the keen sensitivity which he has for words, sounds, and atmosphere. The result is an excruciatingly funny story.

This parody serves however an additional purpose. In choosing to write as he does, Thurber is also saying something about James and the school of writing to which James belongs. He has managed to abstract and to present in isolation the very essence of the Jamesian pattern which, taken as it is out of context, can be studied and examined. He displays more than a great ability as a parodist—he shows what is essentially a thorough understanding and appreciation of James and a sensitivity to the material.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 The grief in the strangers eyes discloses to Marcher an awareness of the irony of his relationship to Miss Bartram In what respects is this relationship ironic?
- 2 What is the function of the stranger at the end of the story? Is he foreshadowed earlier? Why do you think James uses this device? Is it a dishonest trick?
- 3 Could Miss Bartram have changed the relationship with Marcher to a happier one? Why does she not? Why does she accept Marchers terms?
- 4 What is the theme of the story? What is the beast? Where is the jungle?





HE HAD brought himself so fully in the end poor Grantham, to accept his old friend's invitation to accompany her to an afternoon at Cornerbright that now on the very porch of the so evident house he could have, for his companion in all surrender, a high fine—there was no other word for it—twinkle Amy Lighter perfectly took in however as for his constant wonder she always perfectly took in the unmade the wider gesture the unspoken the wonderful oh You could you know she magnificently faced him with it run He promptly matched he even for his, as he had once, falling into her frequent idiom beautifully brought himself to say money exceeded her directness, pressing for all answer the bell In the darkly shining the unfamiliar hallway our poor brave gentleman, a moment later found himself, for all his giving up to it for all his in point of fact sailing into it reaching out as for an arm relinquished Let me it was as though she softly unwrapped it for him, save you It needed nothing more to bring him out of it to bring him indeed whole so to say hog into it Lose me! he fairly threw it at her Lose me! And managing the bravest of waves he magnificently set his face to his prefigured predicament

He had in the fullest degree now the sense of being cut adrift and it was with all jubilant sail set that he made for, saluted and swept past his clearly astonished hostess He was bound for as by it came to him a scanned and ordered chart a paper signed and sealed the woman in it had been his little wiser brown the woman who, he had figured it for Miss Lighter out of the depths of a mysterious desolation was somewhere all set to pounce upon him Oh not his companion had charmingly waived in this of all seasons brown He had not even turned it over The color, he had promptly assured her the certain the unavoidable color of dilemma His companion had on this fully taken in his apprehension, she had walked as it were around and around it She may, of course Amy Lighter had finally brought out for him be charming I can see her, quite clearly in the quietest of blues She might even you know beautifully listen

Oh listen! he gave it back to her She will tell me about her children a boy and a girl She will have I quite see it, the little girl braces on her teeth

Beat her then Amy Lighter had smiled to it Talk if you will, her head off Give her she had added, after a moment the works Our poor sensitive gentleman could only draw, at this, quite collapsing in his chair the longest of sighs

If Charles Grantham's course, before the quickening wind of apprehension remembered and renewed,

took him as now, in fact it did, straight to the high French windows giving onto the garden if in the watchful eyes of his lost companion his swift unerring progress took on the familiar shape of flight it was all he was afterward to protest without the vaguest shied of plan He found himself nonetheless within full view of the way out and it was but natural that our poor friend should before casting anchor and reefing sail ask himself what ever in all the world checked his fair run into the green harbor and the wide free beckoning sea beyond The answer was made for him in the sudden cry, the ventable ahoy of the lady who tacking dangerously to port was at this very moment bearing down upon our drifting gentleman her signals all afflutter, her eyes shining with the bright the triumphant the unmistakable claim of salvage In the brief space, before she in all truth boarded him and carried off her spoils to the he somehow found eyes to see precise corner of his preordained doom he perceived that she wore—that she positively waved as from the highest point of her top gallant mast—a dress which his friend from wherever she might be viewing his unutterable extremity, must confess in all her exquisite honesty to be the very brownness of brownness

He had made through it all, Miss Lighter from her corner in little glances over her shoulder amazedly observed, no smallest gesture on behalf of his embarrassment waving away the proffered cup and glass neglecting to light as in such a crisis, it was his invariable habit so to do the protecting tip of a cigaret He had on the contrary—there could be no doubt of it—wonderfully listened he had been precisely all ears, so that now the party being at last over she fixed him as they walked together with the sharpest of scrutinies She took you all said Amy Lighter in She perfectly held you He fixed her in his turn It was not Grantham said, a history of childish ills It was not moreover the problem of transportation to and from school His companion jumped quite over it She had then, she *has* she cried a predicament Oh he came all out with it the prettiest!

He found a few steps farther along the proper preface I was not seized upon, her friend finally brought out as the detached the dispassionate outsider I was brought in—the lady's husband let me say is long since dead—I was fairly retained as the authority, the specialist Miss Lighter made for him again one of her sudden jumps Your years it could only be that she said your years in Europe He turned his full gaze upon her and taking her arm, since now they had arrived before her house, he guided her sharply away from the spot on which, he clearly sensed, she was firmly set to make the indicated the all too simple final jump There



is he cut the ground out from under her no man—no man at any rate in the sense in which you have made it out—there is not in fine another man spare the mark for *her*. She gave it up on this releasing as in pretty surrender her aim but he was not to escape so easily he was not as he had vainly hoped to sleep on the matter, to refer it for shaping and shading to his own private contemplation for taking now full possession of our poor sensitive friend she quite dragged him up the steps of the house and into the parlor

The figures in the crystal which Grantham, at last, all eagerly shined up for her were five the woman in brown as they were secretly and forever sworn and only so to think of her her two small children—he had been wonderfully right about them—a girl and a boy and two others for whose clearer definition he turned and turned his crystal to catch the searching sparkle of all possible light. They were the manservant in the house of the woman in brown and the manservant's wife they were butler and housekeeper they were and for this our narrator gave a special twist to his crystal natives of some state or other—the woman in brown could not be sure—of Middle Europe. Their names, well he had forgotten but our two conspirators for the pleasant continuance of their so frivolous game hit all gaily upon Peter Quint and Miss Jessel. Oh oh this accomplished Miss Lighter began I quite see it all—the figure in the tower the figure across the pond. He caught her as who should say in midair. My poor dear lady he reproached her our play is set I beg you to remember, in New, he dwelt upon it, York In West—he added for special emphasis, chester

The proof of his having in some subtle sense given himself away stood out for her in the elaborate ritual he made of producing first from one pocket and then from another cigaret case and match box. She took a short turn shrewdly watching and then suddenly, as the little fire of his match leaped up she made her wildest, her sublimest jump of all. You have tested it she cried. You have struck it suddenly with one fingernail and now you turn a little away from it as if to say Why, it has a hollow ring. You have found or you think you have found the truest crack in the bell. He raised against her vehemence the hand that held his cigaret and with it made a little it seemed to her evasive symbol in the air. You are bringing the curtain down you know before the last note of our overture has died away.

Miss Lighter sat down with a gesture of her own and faced him. Well then, she sighed, trot out Peter Quint I promise to attend with the utmost gravity I shall even if you insist charmingly shudder. He made three little helpless wails, one for each stamp of his cigaret in the silver tray. Hear

me he implored his friend out! Write your notice *after* the play. Quit ruffling his voice actually rose your programme

Upon the house of the woman in brown then (he began) had descended on a properly wintry day the manservant and his wife. For the longest while or so his informant of the afternoon had chosen to believe nothing beyond the general run of domestic events had happened nothing in any case had to the common view taken place. She had been unable his informant to make a date to find a name for the first disturbing fact. She had become aware for point of beginning only of a sense that something as she had put it (and put it again) was up.

With this striking toss of her thumb, as it were toward the faint pattern on the unlighted loom a pattern which nonetheless held for her now attentive listener the high promise of a darkly rewarding intricacy our lady of the afternoon had had all of a moment a little helpless drop. He had been able however in no time at all our intuitive friend to dive into the full depths of her silence and come up with what was—as Miss Lighter (he now slyly reminded her) would say—eating the lady. The lady was in simple truth trying without success to fit herself into the design she was striving to weave for him. What she should have guessed all along stood out with the discovery straight and bright for Charles Grantham he was to be called upon to fit the lady into her own design he was in short to work the pattern quite out for her. The lady had found the one the perfect consultant in quandary and he could only holding at last in his very hand the fine clear distillation of his prefigured predicament settle back in his chair and wave her on. Incident! Incident! he had softly cried and when at this his poor bewildered confidant could only give back a halting What? he had found for his abject surrender a plainer form. Dramatize! Dramatize! he had then implored her.

He made out all serenely now (for the enchanted Miss Lighter) what had after an immense amount of backing and filling thereupon ensued shaping the account here and there she was not slow to see, with the refining touch of his exquisite sensibility. There had indeed been incidents, the beauty of which for both our friends lay in the fact that there was nothing in a literal and vulgar sense that could be *proved*. The very frailest supports had sustained the lady's suspicion the fleeting indiscreet lift of childish laughter in the dead of night a quick silence covering but not concealing the scamper of small feet along an unlighted corridor a corridor which the distressed lady had leaned forward to confide might well be a mere recurring avenue of dream. There had stood out moreover (perhaps again in fancy) the signs and symbols of a fair pro-

founder mischief coffee grounds (or were they?) in a silver porringer the faintest lingering perfume—the lady could swear and yet could not—in *purlieus* innocent and sacrosanct which she had identified (God help her she had wailed) as a cordial rich and green and French. What all might not the lady upon this revelation had demanded be going for ward in the dark of the night behind closed doors by the light of a secret candle? To which her new found friend in his turn demanded to know what she had to show for effect. Upon the lady had beautifully kept up with him, the kids? Why just she had given it to him all at once, just that they are definitely *theirs*.

He had moved quickly to squeeze from the arrived moment its farthest juices. Measure it measure it he had cried and when the lady could but blankly stare, he had wonderfully brought it out in—how the long diplomatic years had sealed them up—so many words. Are the children pale gloomy jumpy? he had asked her. Do you see them as neurotic? Her laughter had played all about him like the spray of a fountain. Mercy no! when she had found space for words she made answer. They are utterly they are absolutely perfectly charming!

And it was upon his recital of this wide this breathtaking turn of the play that Charles Grantham gathering up hat and gloves bowed to Miss Lighter and with a charming little cry of *Intermission intermission* made through her reiterated pleas of *Second Act* for the exit.

## II

Amy Lighter made her friend at an early hour on the following morning an importunate sign, a sign which he mournfully protested was at least as wide as a church door she knocked in point of shameless fact upon his portal. The next moment it seemed to him he was keeping pace with her along the pathway of a nearby park. You are holding something back she frankly charged him. You fled from me to keep it to yourself. He gave her only the edge of his glance. It is what, she, nose to the trail now ended up triumphantly you advised her to *do*.

Oh to *do* he marked it off for a closer look. It was what on the contrary he went on after a dozen steps. I advised her *not* to do.

This time she spied it plainly and she was after it in full cry. You told her not she snatched it up and fairly shook it in front of him to fire them! She caught herself up for her pride a throb in advance of her companion's dolorous ah which nonetheless afflicted Amy Lighter with the sharpest sense of his having as it were, shielded his eyes as for a closer view of one who, taken at casual glance for friend turns out on closer examination to be

only the grossest illusion of resemblance. What then *did* you tell her not to do? the lady wailed.

Not to claim my judgment her friend all gently said. I gave her the discreetest look of concern. I made her the politest of murmurs and withdrew.

Miss Lighter pouted over it with the expression of a child whose planned and promised pleasure the sudden coming on of rain has vastly diminished.

You walked out on it she cried. You have left us flat. It came to him as he turned over her charming inclusive term that he must figure to her eager enterprise, as one who tears up a covenant in the very moment of its being signed, and he could but assure her that if he had indeed withdrawn he had withdrawn for the simple sake of the larger view to the post of observation. Oh the larger view! his friend's impatience flared out at him. Watch a riot from too great a height and it becomes a charming native dance. This was a game at which, in long and expert play he had a hundred times excelled and leaning toward her smilingly as from his old Legation chair he made the sure, the easy the almost flippant movement of the designated piece.

If you cannot see the dancing for the dancers said Charles Grantham a ball is nothing more than a *bagarre*.

His companion took fifty paces in silence during which—he had the touching proof of it in the clenching and unclenching of her fingers—she mightily tugged at the monstrous foundation of such an overwhelming axiomatic generalization as would have—she had but to loosen it from the imprisoning vines of her indignation—fairly squashed him where he stood. What she at long last came up with abandoning the unequal struggle with the too formidable boulder was a handful of the sharpest pebbles. You should call on her. You should talk with the children. You should see for yourself what is going on. He scooped up and cast back at her a handful of his own. Should I draw out the servants? Should I peek into pantries? Should I prow about below stairs upending God save us all mattresses in search of Baudelaire and Benedictine?

There followed for Grantham upon this singular this unique, this indubitable outburst the shocked recognition of his having in the very act of rejecting her strategy, fallen plump into the middle of her tactics. He had moreover his high preposterous note upon the troubled air condemned him to confess exposed as by the wild incautious waving of regimental colors the precise and secret line of his retreat. She was upon him in a flash. Ah Miss Lighter groaned it is the *gentleman* who is afraid! Is it that you fear our lady of the afternoon might say Come in Mr Grantham shake hands with Peter Quint? He could only now smiling in but the smallest way, come out with it. I am afraid of them all said.

Charles Grantham and as for further explanation he had no word she strove to figure why as she put it to herself he had so cooled off overnight that now his shoes removed he was stealing quietly away from their predicament in his stockinged feet.

He had been brought deviously and unware once again before her door on the realization of which he performed bowing over her hand his little ritual of adieu but grasping him figuratively by the nape of his neck she guided him taking no note of his decorous protests firmly up the steps and into her parlor. She seemed to his disconsolate eye, as she took a turn the length of the room and back again to pick up words and put them down but in the end she could but show him for all her pains her two uplifted hands as who should say Where were we? What after a space Grantham put to her do you figure me as bringing to it? Should I come bearing would you say Tennyson and tea? And would that make everything as right as a trivet or an apple pie? She met this as it were at the door with her merriest laugh but he watched her—so it showed for him—set it in a chair for graver study and he had in the face of her long look at it not the smallest of his squirmings. He was to come back to it this moment he was long afterward, to bend above it stirring its dust lighting so to say matches over it but it produced upon Grantham as he sat there no larger effect than the faint ticking of the other seconds which passed before Amy Lighter spoke. I see you she said as winning the children away from them Surely the diplomatic ribbon is more enchanting than, she rose to it, the *sommelier's* cham.

Oh oh Charles Grantham closed swiftly in and turned it back on her. And precisely who dear lady of all our little group might find it so?

His hostess held it for the longest while turning it over and over. Are you trying to tell me she finally shrewdly cried that the woman in brown has made it all up just to she had a helpless gesture just to set you on her mantelpiece as an adornment? Before he could make her any answer, she was in and out of a hundred doors, hitherto unguessed at of his long low rambling apprehension.

Do you mean she pitched it very high that she presented her children as charming and enchanted with this vulgar end in view? Do you mean there are perhaps no servants whatsoever of the kind no dark passages and perils no figure deep and secret? There came to him, in the train of this, the realization that in some obscure desperation she had given up all her own striking turns of phrase she had fallen in short into his as if she hoped by getting quite inside of him to ascertain what—thus yesterday she would have put it—made him tick. Oh leave me out of it, implored Charles Grantham,

out of at least so utter and vast a dropping off I'm not worth that for any lady's mantelpiece. I was only pulling at a thread to see what might unravel. She had a faint brave smile. You left the lady in pulling at your thread stark raving as my mother used to say naked. Amy Lighter said. He had his own small smile and word for this. Oh well then clothe her while I look the other way. His companion came at it through still another door. Do you see the children then as making it all up? Perhaps the real and only villain is some story they have read. She had sat down but now she leaped from her chair. Perhaps the story! she fairly shouted.

He stared at her in frank discomfiture for by her new and sudden twists of the *donne* her fresh and frantic glances first from a point too high and then a point too low, at their so fully walked about dilemma she had made him wonder for a moment precisely who *she* was precisely *where* in or out of this so special interlude he could fit her in and make her stick. But as not knowing what in the world else to do or say he moved a cautious hand toward hat and gloves she quickly found to cry. Oh, no you don't! I know perfectly well she went on what you expect me to say next. You expect me to say that perhaps the servants are, in truth agents of a special kind assigned to keep a sharp eye on the children who are in reality midgets possessed of a police record as long as your arm. When on this he could but wildly gape she continued. Can't you see I'm making fun of you? Can't you see I'm showing you how easy and how utterly idiotic it is to kick the living daylight out of our poor little predicament? She marked off a pause in which to bite her lower lip. Can't you see, she plunged ahead that it is a predicament *within* a predicament—the predicament of you and me? What happens to us if I stand by while you proceed to rearrange the figures in our story to represent nothing more challenging for peril faced and problem shared than the inauguration of Benjamin Harrison?

Not for long years had Charles Grantham been so turned upon thrust at and struck down not in fact—the precise instance came back to him in a rush—since the irascible plenipotentiary of a certain Balkan country, during a period of tender international relations completely missing a negative and wrongly translating a salient verb had risen from his chair to heap upon the speechless American diplomat coals of fire in five separate (one could scarcely have said distinct) languages. What stood out brightly for Grantham what positively shone for him was that the light which struck in from wherever it struck in, played no longer upon the quintet in the crystal but fairly bathed in fine cold brilliance the figures of Miss Lighter and himself,

who after making narrower and narrower circles about their mutual entanglement stood suddenly motionless upon a tiny peak of time uncertain unhappy which afflicted our poor gentleman with the sharpest pain of all comfortable

I was not her friend heard himself remarkably saying out of his profound embarrassment I was not even *presented* to the lady in brown To which, Amy Lighter a chilling quality in her small laugh at once gave answer One is not presented to the victim of a street accident but one does not she made a stuck gong of it just sit there Upon which her guest immediately arising hat and gloves in hand could but make his most formal bow I should like Charles Grantham said I should wonderfully like to do some faint far justice to he had a moment's groping for it our peril but I have lost—ah how clearly you have set it off for my reluctant heart—I have quite utterly and forever lost he nobly if all forlornly came up to it the name of action

The beauty of her next remark and the fact of its appearing to him as beautiful quite shimmered for our miserable gentleman quite blinded him as with the radiant proof of his having somehow through it all still clutched the hem so to speak of her sustaining realism the beauty of it I say lay in the plain truth that there was in it precisely no beauty in the general sense of the term whatsoever *Nuts alors!* Amy Lighter quite simply said and taking his hand a second in advance of his placing it upon the knob of her front door she all sublimely brought out I will not let *anything* go! He had, as he stepped out upon the porch an italic of his own I leave it *all* said Charles Grantham, where it so wonderfully belongs—in dear lady, your charming and capable hands

### III

It chanced if chance it could be called that Grantham was summoned although we should perhaps not peer too closely into this, to Washington in the mazes of which bewildering city he spent one way and another the ensuing fortnight receiving no sign from Miss Lighter making no sign of his own If the days of our gentleman of the chanceleries were not too aiduous his nights, nonetheless were visited by dreams of the most outlandish and terrifying nature He was pursued in recurring night mares by two small but dimly defined figures whose clearest and at the same time, awfulest characteristic was the presence, on their right hands of two extra fingers covered with a sticky substance whose faint sweet aroma identified it, beyond doubt as some kind of candy or other, but there was nevertheless to the sleeper's sense, in spite of this the strongest and most dreadful suspicion that the stuff

had undergone in some monstrous manner a dipping into he found the word for it when he awoke anisette Through the perilous passageways of his dark haunted world our dreamer pursued and almost overtaken by his two small familiars had more than once escaped the clutch of their horrid hands only by dint of running up a hundred stairs and in the last and nearest chase he had been forced to climb that tall and vulgar pile of steel which affronts the Champs de Mars

It was with the sharpest sense of relief then that Charles Grantham at the end of his appointed time in our crowded capital found himself again upon a train On his arrival at his destination he gave but scant time to the refreshment of his spirits and his linen changing into a clean collar drinking off a cup of milk he took his hat and gloves and made straightway for the home of Amy Lighter Beautiful upon the stairs in something white and filmy (the maid having let him in) she poised for a long fine moment before all joyfully she swept down to claim both his hands for hers Once again in her familiar her to him only a little less than his recent dreams haunted parlor he sat in his accustomed chair and stared up at her

Something has happened he said all at once Oh, everything has happened said Miss Lighter You have happened I mean he took it straight up to our predicament—to *your* predicament Oh to ours to ours, cried his friend He shook his head I gave it all to you he said I quite plumped it in your lap She gave it he thought too easy a wave Is it then all settled? he asked It's all *everything* she said It blew up and it blew over On its side? he incredulously wanted to know Away she said with another wave He was on the very edge of his chair I am all ears he almost wailed

Thereupon Amy Lighter began with I saw her at lunch I saw her at tea I was *there* to dinner Grantham's ah had the effect on them both of a one note chime dropping into the silence of a deserted house He had another of his sharp senses this time the sharp sense that the empty house in which his note sounded and lingered was theirs and the fear rose in him that during their little pause she too all vainly listened for the coming of foot steps and the opening of the door She made it when she went on as simple and brief as could be as if she feared measuring stress and strain his fine sensitivity would not bear the weight of too oft repeated squeals ( Then what do you suppose? Now, see if you can guess? ) or of too many liftings of the narrative to high vertiginous peaks of insufferable suspense

She had seen the servants they were the lady in white said, slight fifty deferential, Hungarian they

neither bowed too low nor smiled too often she had Miss Lighter said liked them The children for their part were, indeed charming they were all she gave it a special shape for his delight of a twinkling gravity Grantham placed at the base of this a little garland of ahs but his hostess rushed on It was she pointed out quite beautifully simple The Qunts (our two friends had the perfect smile for this)—the Qunts had always wanted had never had no longer could hope for children of their own I mean began Miss Lighter but he made with one finger a small up beat and she let it trail away Oh Miss Lighter rushed along they had cast a spell on the children all right they had caught them in a bright enchantment the dark prefigured secret of which our snooping lady had in several visits to the house searched for in vain

Miss Lighter rose now for one of her turns about the room I found she suddenly said to her guest positively and precisely *nothing*! He gave her last word a hollow echo through which she swiftly proceeded with What exactly did we expect? She charmingly brought him into it What strange sign what curious symbol what mark of what beast what hint of huggermugger, what exchange of secret signals?

My poor dear lady was all that Charles Grantham could find for this

An alembic under a bed? she went on Veilame beneath a tiny pillow? A stain on a lintel? A snatch of incantation? A dilated pupil? A rose turning black? There was I repeat, precisely nothing She walked up to his chair I even spent the night said Amy Lighter

You spent the night? he cried

I spent the night she said again, and opening her hands Nothing she slowly murmured A dripping faucet a banging shutter a board contracting and creaking in a cooling corridor He gave to this alliteration a single bringing together of the palms of his hands Oh she said mistaking him our curtain has not come down There remained for me an awesome task the task in short of conveying to the woman in brown once and for all, that there had been no obscene rites involving eye of newt and toe of frog or scrapings from old consecrated bells or counter clockwise circlings of a moonlit church I had to let her know you see, that it had all been managed the winning of her children's hearts in broadest daylight, by the exercise of the most natural arts

Such as? her friend gently breathed

Such as a bright eye an attentive ear, a skilful hand Miss Lighter came back at once The Qunts for I saw them at it could in their proper turn and time, be both audience and players And where all the while, Grantham had to ask, was our

woman in brown? Oh in a book Miss Lighter cleared it up for him in a state at a party yelling for help

Her guest paid to this the while his frown persisted the solicited laugh But why in goodness name Grantham at length demanded didn't she as you would have had me put it to her one day fire them? That was easy enough for his companion Doubts are doubts she said hopes are hopes and above all in this so special period, servants are servants

Charles Grantham had a long admiring gaze at Amy Lighter before he settled further in his chair to say However did you in the end tell her? She had her jolliest laugh of the afternoon before she—the music still in her tone—replied By virtue can you ever forgive me of three martinis—this at our final luncheon together in her home—which had quite the opposite effect of sounding a clear bell for the poor dear lady I should have attempted the business on my first Instead of bringing the simple light of the matter in measured colors through my polished prism I struck a confused and even blacker dread into her tortured heart Grantham sat forward in his chair again I heard myself pursued Miss Lighter attempting to describe in terms of two different sets of verse a million glittering miles apart (at least they glittered for me then) how her children had walked in brightness not in gloom how they had come in short all clean and good and normal out of our ghoul haunted woodland—perhaps I should have stuck to Poe or to the simple statement

But what you exactly said? Grantham prompted her

What I exactly said cried Amy Lighter was You can my very very dear friend rest forever assured that whereas your darlings are blissfully aware that little lambs eat ivy they do not entertain the slightest suspicion that it runs in their hearts as it rains on the town And I added my hand on hers Oh never reproach their innocent hearts with *Qua tu fait de ta jennesse*?

Grantham got up from his chair to take ten slow paces around his companion's remarkable revelation before he turned to her with And the effect upon your bewildered hostess of your altogether enchanting obliquity was precisely what?

Precisely the wildest imaginable said Miss Lighter She gaped at me as if I had whispered to her ear the horrid proof that all her fears were true twice over She rose and staggered to the cold to call the servants in The scene that then ensued was indescribable made up of pleas, and shouts and tears, and gettings down on knees and pointings toward the door Not one of us could have gasped more than a third of it I shouted out, I think in

French above the English and Hungarian it will wake me shrieking from my sleep until the day I die

Giantham had enormous difficulty in finding the tip of a cigaret with his lighted match and his perturbation was not assuaged when all of a sudden Miss Lighter loudly laughed I can see you, you poor dear she exclaimed standing there in the dreadful midst of it holding your tray of *Idylls of the King* and orange pekoe! It gave him such a drop as brought his companion to her feet for a gentle pat of his arm We could hear them as we panted in our corners Miss Lighter went back to it packing and sobbing sobbing and packing but they have gone I may at once cheer you with it to a distinguished a tranquil a less fearful household He tucked this, with a sigh of relief and a gesture of finality into its safe and ordered pigeonhole

The children his narrator continued were at school We awaited their coming in the highest apprehension I tapping my fingers my hostess cracking it quite drove me mad her knuckles

And when at long I'm sure it must have seemed to you last, they returned and were told? quavered Giantham Why she said they turned upon their mother they screamed that they hated her and would always hate her they said that she had sent away the people they in the whole would most loved Thereupon they ran screaming from the house and our poor stricken lady still cracking her knuckles, dissolved in tears upon my bosom Our diplomat covered his eyes with his hands as if a glare too strong for him had searched him out

We sat there for hours Amy Lighter took up her narrative again while she went over it and over it and over it and over it There seemed to be for the appeasement of her anguish only the tiniest gram of consolation This resided in the consideration that she would save by their going—the servants of course—three hundred dollars a month It was upon one of her numberless reiterations of this vulgar fact this saving shred of silver lining that from the hallway in which they had been silently hiding our two little eavesdroppers who had crept all stealthily into the house by the back door came into the room Their eyes were dry and wide their mouths quite open Gee! they cried and Gee! again Do you mean you paid them three hundred dollars a month? And when their mother said she had indeed they brought out a long sequence of gees and goshes and by gollies You perceive of course they were figuring in terms of toys and candy and movies and pony rides their share of the released booty

Miss Lighter extracted from her friend's proffered silver case a cigaret with which, after leaning toward his flame, she drew a little line in the air I left

them all three of them she finished up joyously blubbering and babbling and hugging and kissing So endeth she stabbed out her cigaret in a tray our dark tale not with a whimper but I hope, my dear friend a proper and satisfactory bang

Oh the bang was all yours said Charles Giantham nobly I quite stuck my fingers in my ears He got up crossed to the mantelpiece picked up studied and set down a bit of *Staffordshire* and turned at last to her Madam Life's a piece in bloom quoted Charles Giantham Death goes dogging everywhere She's the tenant of the room He's the ruffian on the stair I think your paraphrase of another poet came so easily to your lips to close out our tale because you see in me the very type and sign of old J Alfred Prufrock Oh I have paid my court from far across the room behind a chair but I fully believe that if and when the ruffian breaks into the place, I will be able to wag my finger in his face and say (we come to still a greater poet) Shake then thy gory locks at me and watch me if I tremble

His hostess ran her sensitive fingers over what he had given her but making nothing whatever out of it she cried But there has been no such awful threat to any one of us!

Oh oh and that's just it said Giantham If the dreadful object is presented so that I can plainly see it why who's afraid? She sensed that one more step would bring him to his peroration and in silence she let him take it If I should strike he made his step at every rustling in the undergrowth a high heroic stance sword drawn from cane and civ Come out come out! and if there should advance in answer to my challenge on veritable tippy toe the most comical of beasts about its neck a pink and satiny ribbon tied in the fluffiest of bows what dear lady in the name of Heaven would become of me?

Well there it was then his beast in the dingle out in the open at last scampering about and when she could find breath Miss Lighter merrily laughing put a name to it A kitty cat she cried a kitty cat for a tiger!

Oh said Giantham for the matter of that, a bunny rabbit

But isn't that precisely what I cocktail in hand challenged from the bushes? his friend gaily demanded

Oh but you *challenged* it he threw back at her while I watched from a safe and sorry distance He brought out before she could prevent it an epitaph Here lies one who tippy toed away from it away from you away from us

She cut with a tired impatient gesture straight through to the point around which she had the strongest sensation, he was set to make one of his



wide interminable cacklings What are you trying to make out of it all?

Oh he had the answer for that it was as if he had kept it for the longest while shined up and ready in his most accessible pocket Nothing Charles Grantham exquisitely wailed, nothing and in the deep silence that followed a clock some where far away sprinkled the disconsolate the incomprehensible hour upon their bowed heads There was for our lady—oh for our gentleman too—the feeling of a fine literature of living breaking into flame flaring high falling suddenly to ashes

I would marry you at the drop of a hat she threw beautifully out for him

He tenderly sank almost up to his drooping shoulders into the subjunctive Would *have* he murmured had I but had— He let it die away and arose almost briskly and took and held her hand

They are sending me away said Charles Grantham She got up and took his other hand applying the most affectionate pressure meeting his eye with the deepest possible gaze but they both felt it I think as a letting go and not a holding on Wherever in the world are you going? she plaintively moaned

Ask me that again he said sadly smiling at the door and when after turning the knob a moment later he bent over her hand as they heard the faint, the unmistakable sound of the curtain rustling down, she asked him her question again

Why here I go cried Charles Grantham with a little toss of his hand and his best his most wonderful twinkle round the prickly pear and he was off shoulders squared head erect down the steps and up the street without a backward glance leaving behind him in the doorway still staring a bewildered lady in whose consciousness there was forever after to echo and echo again, a little broken fragment of question



## The Facts of Life

*W Somerset Maugham*

The stories of Somerset Maugham are famous throughout the world for interest and general appeal Many of them like *Rain* have been made into plays and movies others have been anthologized and reprinted in all the countries of the world Perhaps the major reason for Maugham's popularity is the fact that he is a master craftsman and a superb teller of tales He has developed

the skill to write well he has a cosmopolitan background and a wide acquaintanceship which inform his stories with understanding and charm and above all he knows how to entertain his reader Maugham himself has no greater aspiration than this In his own admission he conceives the function of the writer to be that of narrating interestingly

It is not surprising therefore to find in *The Facts of Life* a good example of engaging writing from the point of view of plot a story well put together and finely constructed Yet despite the fact that Maugham is evidently trying to convey a certain thematic significance it is doubtful if there remains in the story much beside this construction and plot Like so many stories of this type it is more form than content and there is relatively little likelihood that the reader once he knows the denouement would care to read the story again It is therefore an example of a story written in the main on a single narrative level

This judgment is best confirmed by an examination of several aspects of the story in detail The characteristics of Nicky that we are given are almost without exception external he is young handsome athletic No interior trait which would enable us to place any moral choice in perspective is suggested so that there is no means by which we may judge the plausibility or significance of what he does His father about whom we know little gives him some standard advice to keep away from gambling and women When he goes to Monte Carlo he disregards this advice He gambles and wins and his encounter with a woman ends up with his being ahead financially

Superficially therefore it would appear that Maugham is attempting to say something about the meaninglessness of standard morality after all a boy who disregards it comes out the better for having done so and it is this conclusion which causes his father to worry at the close of the story But just as Maugham fails to give us any basis on which to assess the behavior of Nicky so does he fail to examine the nature of morality He assumes that morality is a question of rules rather than a question of attitude and ethical philosophy This assumption which is expressed by Nicky's father implies that the reason why one should not gamble is that one loses and that the reason one should avoid improper relationships with women is that one will suffer in some way as a result A little consideration however will reveal that if it is wrong to gamble—in other words if it is a matter of moral principle—then it is as wrong to gamble when one wins as to gamble when one loses The reason for not gambling does not lie in the chances of success but in the act itself In the same way if relationships with women of doubtful reputation are considered to be morally inadvisable they must remain so irrespective of the outcome of any one of them The father's concern over the effects of Nicky's adventures on the boy's morality is as poorly considered as are the motivations of the boy himself and we are therefore left with a story that depends not on character not on a genuine irony but on the turn of events alone If

Nicky had lost at gambling and if his companion had fleeced him the alleged problem of the story the irony of situation would not be present. The ending of the story, as well as the outcome of Nicky's adventures does not depend in any way on what has gone before and is neither logical nor inevitable. The characters do not control what happens to them so much as they are passive receivers of external episodes.

One can learn from this that apparent irony and apparent significance often conceal an utter absence of either. To read Maugham's story on more than the plot level is therefore to be taken in by false appearance which examination of the structure shortly unmasks. This does not mean that *The Facts of Life* is a poor story but it does mean that it falls short of containing all that a story might. Compare it with *The Wall* (Sartre) or *The Beast in the Jungle* (James) in order to see the difference in the relationship of character to event. Maugham's story is an excellent representative of a class of short story which is common, widespread, enjoyable and quite legitimate but which is limited in its content and range of significance. Maugham does what he sets out to do but what he sets out to do is only a small aspect of the possibilities in literature and should not be taken for the whole.

IT WAS Henry Garnet's habit on leaving the city of an afternoon to drop in at his club and play bridge before going home to dinner. He was a pleasant man to play with. He knew the game well, and you could be sure that he would make the best of his cards. He was a good loser and when he won was more inclined to ascribe his success to his luck than to his skill. He was indulgent and if his partner made a mistake could be trusted to find an excuse for him. It was surprising then on this occasion to hear him telling his partner with unnecessary sharpness that he had never seen a hand worse played and it was more surprising still to see him not only make a grave error himself, an error of which you would never have thought him capable but when his partner not unwilling to get a little of his own back pointed it out insist against all reason and with considerable heat that he was perfectly right. But they were all old friends, the men he was playing with and none of them took his ill humour very seriously. Henry Garnet was a broker, a partner in a firm of repute and it occurred to one of them that something had gone wrong with some stock he was interested in.

How's the market today? he asked.

Booming. Even the suckers are making money."

It was evident that stocks and shares had nothing to do with Henry Garnet's vexation but something was the matter that was evident too. He was a hearty fellow who enjoyed excellent health, he had plenty of money, he was fond of his wife and de-

voted to his children. As a rule he had high spirits and he laughed easily at the nonsense they were apt to talk while they played but today he sat glum and silent. His brows were crossly puckered and there was a sulky look about his mouth. Presently to ease the tension one of the others mentioned a subject upon which they all knew Henry Garnet was glad to speak.

How's your boy, Henry? I see he's done pretty well in the tournament.

Henry Garnet's frown grew darker.

He's done no better than I expected him to.

When does he come back from Monte?

He got back last night.

Did he enjoy himself?

I suppose so, all I know is that he made a damned fool of himself.

Oh, How?

I'd rather not talk about it if you don't mind.

The three men looked at him with curiosity. Henry Garnet scowled at the green baize.

Sorry, old boy. Your call.

The game proceeded in a strained silence. Garnet got his bid and when he played his cards so badly that he went three down not a word was said. Another rubber was begun, and in the second game Garnet denied a suit.

Having none? his partner asked him.

Garnet's irritability was such that he did not even reply and when at the end of the hand it appeared that he had revoked and that his revoke cost the rubber it was not to be expected that his partner should let his carelessness go without remark.

What the devil's the matter with you, Henry? he said. You're playing like a fool.

Garnet was disconcerted. He did not so much mind losing a big rubber himself but he was sore that his inattention should have made his partner lose too. He pulled himself together.

I'd better not play any more. I thought a few rubbers would calm me but the fact is I can't give my mind to the game. To tell you the truth I'm in a hell of a temper.

They all burst out laughing.

You don't have to tell us that, old boy. It's obvious.

Garnet gave them a rueful smile.

Well, I bet you'd be in a temper if what's happened to me had happened to you. As a matter of fact I'm in a damned awkward situation and if any of you fellows can give me any advice how to deal with it I'd be grateful.

Let's have a drink and you tell us all about it. With a K.C., a Home Office official and an eminent surgeon—if we can't tell you how to deal with a situation nobody can.

The K.C. got up and rang the bell for a waiter.



It's about that damned boy of mine said Henry Garnet

Drinks were ordered and brought And this is the story that Henry Garnet told them

The boy of whom he spoke was his only son His name was Nicholas and of course he was called Nicky He was eighteen The Garnets had two daughters besides one of sixteen and the other of twelve but however unreasonable it seemed for a father is generally supposed to like his daughters best and though he did all he could not to show his preference there was no doubt that the greater share of Henry Garnet's affection was given to his son He was kind in a chaffing casual way to his daughters and gave them handsome presents on their birthdays and at Christmas but he doted on Nicky Nothing was too good for him He thought the world of him He could hardly take his eyes off him You could not blame him for Nicky was a son that any parent might have been proud of He was six foot two lithe but muscular with broad shoulders and a slim waist and he held himself gallantly erect he had a charming head well placed on the shoulders with pale brown hair that waved slightly blue eyes with long dark lashes under well marked eye brows a full red mouth and a tanned clean skin When he smiled he showed very regular and very white teeth He was not shy but there was a modesty in his demeanour that was attractive In social intercourse he was easy polite and quietly gay He was the offspring of nice healthy decent parents he had been well brought up in a good home he had been sent to a good school and the general result was as engaging a specimen of young manhood as you were likely to find in a long time You felt that he was as honest, open and virtuous as he looked He had never given his parents a moment's uneasiness As a child he was seldom ill and never naughty As a boy he did everything that was expected of him His school reports were excellent He was wonderfully popular and he ended his career, with a creditable number of prizes, as head of the school and captain of the football team But this was not all At the age of fourteen Nicky had developed an unexpected gift for lawn tennis This was a game that his father not only was fond of but played very well and when he discerned in the boy the promise of a tennis player he fostered it During the holidays he had him taught by the best professionals and by the time he was sixteen he had won a number of tournaments for boys of his age He could beat his father so badly that only parental affection reconciled the older player to the poor show he put up At eighteen Nicky went to Cambridge and Henry Garnet conceived the ambition that before he was through with the university he should play for it Nicky had all the qualifications for becoming a great

tennis player He was tall he had a long reach he was quick on his feet and his timing was perfect He realized instinctively where the ball was coming and seemingly without hurry was there to take it He had a powerful serve with a nasty break that made it difficult to return and his forehand drive low long and accurate was deadly He was not so good on the backhand and his volleying was wild but all through the summer before he went to Cambridge Henry Garnet made him work on these points under the best teacher in England At the back of his mind though he did not even mention it to Nicky he cherished a further ambition to see his son play at Wimbledon, and who could tell perhaps be chosen to represent his country in the Davis Cup A great lump came into Henry Garnet's throat as he saw in fancy his son leap over the net to shake hands with the American champion whom he had just defeated and walk off the court to the deafening plaudits of the multitude

As an assiduous frequenter of Wimbledon Henry Garnet had a good many friends in the tennis world and one evening he found himself at a city dinner sitting next to one of them a Colonel Brabazon and in due course began talking to him of Nicky and what chance there might be of his being chosen to play for his university during the following season

Why don't you let him go down to Monte Carlo and play in the spring tournament there? said the Colonel suddenly

Oh I don't think he's good enough for that He's not nineteen yet he only went up to Cambridge last October he wouldn't stand a chance against all those cracks

Of course, Austin and Von Cramm and so on would knock spots off him but he might snatch a game or two and if he got up against some of the smaller fry there's no reason why he shouldn't win two or three matches He's never been up against any of the first rate players and it would be wonderful practice for him He'd learn a lot more than he'll ever learn in the seaside tournaments you enter him for

I wouldn't dream of it I'm not going to let him leave Cambridge in the middle of a term I've always impressed upon him that tennis is only a game and it mustn't interfere with work

Colonel Brabazon asked Garnet when the term ended

That's all right He'd only have to cut about three days Surely that could be arranged You see, two of the men we were depending on have let us down and we're in a hole We want to send as good a team as we can The Germans are sending their best players and so are the Americans

Nothing doing old boy In the first place Nicky's

not good enough and secondly I don't fancy the idea of sending a kid like that to Monte Carlo without anyone to look after him. If I could get away myself I might think of it but that's out of the question.

I shall be there. I'm going as the nonplaying captain of the English team. I'll keep an eye on him.

You'll be busy and besides it's not a responsibility I'd like to ask you to take. He's never been abroad in his life and to tell you the truth I shouldn't have a moment's peace all the time he was there.

They left it at that and presently Henry Garnet went home. He was so flattered by Colonel Brabazon's suggestion that he could not help telling his wife.

Fancy his thinking Nicky's as good as that. He told me he'd seen him play and his style was fine. He only wants more practice to get into the first flight. We shall see the kid playing in the semi-finals at Wimbledon yet, old girl.

To his surprise Mrs. Garnet was not so much opposed to the notion as he would have expected.

'After all the boy's eighteen. Nicky's never got into mischief yet and there's no reason to suppose he will now.'

There's his work to be considered. don't forget that. I think it would be a very bad precedent to let him cut the end of term.

But what can three days matter? It seems a shame to rob him of a chance like that. I'm sure he'd jump at it if you asked him.

Well, I'm not going to. I haven't sent him to Cambridge just to play tennis. I know he's steady but it's silly to put temptation in his way. He's much too young to go to Monte Carlo by himself.

You say he won't have a chance against these crack players but you can't tell.

Henry Garnet sighed a little. On the way home in the car it had struck him that Austin's health was uncertain and that Von Cramm had his off days. Supposing just for the sake of argument that Nicky had a bit of luck like that—then there would be no doubt that he would be chosen to play for Cambridge. But of course that was all nonsense.

Nothing doing, my dear. I've made up my mind and I'm not going to change it.

Mrs. Garnet held her peace. But next day she wrote to Nicky telling him what had happened and suggested to him what she would do in his place if wanting to go. He wished to get his father's consent. A day or two later Henry Garnet received a letter from his son. He was bubbling over with excitement. He had seen his tutor who was a tennis player himself and the Provost of his college who happened to know Colonel Brabazon and no objection would be made to his leaving before the end of term. They both thought it an opportunity that

shouldn't be missed. He didn't see what harm he could come to and if only just this once his father would stretch a point well next term he promised faithfully he'd work like blazes. It was a very pretty letter. Mrs. Garnet watched her husband read it at the breakfast table. She was undisturbed by the frown on his face. He threw it over to her.

I don't know why you thought it necessary to tell Nicky something I told you in confidence. It's too bad of you. Now you've thoroughly unsettled him.

I'm so sorry. I thought it would please him to know that Colonel Brabazon had such a high opinion of him. I don't see why one should only tell people the disagreeable things that are said about them. Of course I made it quite clear that there could be no question of his going.

You've put me in an odious position. If there's anything I hate it's for the boy to look upon me as a spoilsport and a tyrant.

Oh, he'll never do that. He may think you rather silly and unreasonable but I'm sure he'll understand that it's only for his own good that you're being so unkind.

Christ said Henry Garnet.

His wife had a great inclination to laugh. She knew the battle was won. Dear oh dear how easy it was to get men to do what you wanted. For appearance sake Henry Garnet held out for forty-eight hours but then he yielded and a fortnight later Nicky came to London. He was to start for Monte Carlo next morning and after dinner when Mrs. Garnet and her elder daughter had left them Henry took the opportunity to give his son some good advice.

I don't feel quite comfortable about letting you go off to a place like Monte Carlo at your age practically by yourself. He finished but there it is and I can only hope you'll be sensible. I don't want to play the heavy father but there are three things especially that I want to warn you against. One is gambling. don't gamble. the second is money. don't lend anyone money and the third is women. don't have anything to do with women. If you don't do any of those three things you can't come to much harm so remember them well.

All right, Father. Nicky smiled.

That's my last word to you. I know the world pretty well and believe me my advice is sound.

I won't forget it. I promise you.

That's a good chap. Now let's go up and join the ladies.

Nicky beat neither Austin nor Von Cramm in the Monte Carlo tournament but he did not disgrace himself. He snatched an unexpected victory over a Spanish player and gave one of the Austrians a closer match than anyone had thought possible. In the mixed doubles he got into the semifinals. His

chance conquered everyone and he vastly enjoyed himself. It was generally allowed that he showed promise and Colonel Brabazon told him that when he was a little older and had had more practice with first class players he would be a credit to his father. The tournament came to an end and the day following he was to fly back to London. Anxious to play his best he had lived very carefully, smoking little and drinking nothing and going to bed early but on his last evening he thought he would like to see something of the life in Monte Carlo of which he had heard so much. An official dinner was given to the tennis players and after dinner with the rest of them he went into the Sporting Club. It was the first time he had been there. Monte Carlo was very full and the rooms were crowded. Nicky had never before seen roulette played except in the pictures in a maze he stopped at the first table he came to, chips of different sizes were scattered over the green cloth in what looked like a hopeless muddle. The croupier gave the wheel a sharp turn and with a flick threw in the little white ball. After what seemed an endless time the ball stopped and another croupier with a broad indifferent gesture raked in the chips of those who had lost.

Presently Nicky wandered over to where they were playing *trente et quarante* but he couldn't understand what it was all about and he thought it dull. He saw a crowd in another room and sauntered in. A big game of baccara was in progress and he was immediately conscious of the tension. The players were protected from the thronging bystanders by a brass rail. They sat round the table nine on each side with the dealer in the middle and the croupier facing him. Big money was changing hands. The dealer was a member of the Greek Syndicate. Nicky looked at his impassive face. His eyes were watchful but his expression never changed whether he won or lost. It was a terrifying, strangely impressive sight. It gave Nicky who had been thriftily brought up a peculiar thrill to see someone risk a thousand pounds on the turn of a card and when he lost make a little joke and laugh. It was all terribly exciting. An acquaintance came up to him.

Been doing any good? he asked.

I haven't been playing.

Wise of you. Rotten game. Come and have a drink.

All right.

While they were having it Nicky told his friend that this was the first time he had ever been in the rooms.

Oh but you must have one little flutter before you go. It's idiotic to leave Monte without having tried your luck. After all it won't hurt you to lose a hundred francs or so.

I don't suppose it will, but my father wasn't any

too keen on my coming at all and one of the three things he particularly advised me not to do was to gamble.

But when Nicky left his companion he strolled back to one of the tables where they were playing roulette. He stood for a while looking at the losers' money being raked in by the croupier and the money that was won paid out to the winners. It was impossible to deny that it was thrilling. His friend was right it did seem silly to leave Monte without putting something on the table just once. It would be an experience and at his age you had to have all the experience you could get. He reflected that he hadn't promised his father not to gamble, he'd promised him not to forget his advice. It wasn't quite the same was it? He took a hundred franc note out of his pocket and rather shyly put it on number eighteen. He chose it because that was his age. With a wildly beating heart he watched the wheel turn. The little white ball whizzed about like a small demon of mischief. The wheel went round more slowly. The little white ball hesitated. It seemed about to stop. It went on again. Nicky could hardly believe his eyes when it fell into number eighteen. A lot of chips were passed over to him and his hands trembled as he took them. It seemed to amount to a lot of money. He was so confused that he never thought of putting anything on the following round. In fact he had no intention of playing any more. Once was enough and he was surprised when eighteen again came up. There was only one chip on it.

By George you've won again, said a man who was standing near to him.

Me? I hadn't got anything on.

Yes you had. Your original stake. They always leave it on unless you ask for it back. Didn't you know?

Another packet of chips was handed over to him. Nicky's head reeled. He counted his gains. Seven thousand francs. A queer sense of power seized him. He felt wonderfully clever. This was the easiest way of making money that he had ever heard of. His frank, charming face was wreathed in smiles. His bright eyes met those of a woman standing by his side. She smiled.

You're in luck, she said.

She spoke English but with a foreign accent.

I can hardly believe it. It's the first time I've ever played.

That explains it. Lend me a thousand francs will you? I've lost everything I've got. I'll give it you back in half an hour.

All right.

She took a large red chip from his pile and with a word of thanks disappeared. The man who had spoken to him before grunted.

You'll never see that again.

Nicky was dashed. His father had particularly advised him not to lend anyone money. What a silly thing to do! And to somebody he'd never seen in his life. But the fact was, he felt at that moment such a love for the human race that it had never occurred to him to refuse. And that big red chip it was almost impossible to realize that it had any value. Oh well, it didn't matter, he still had six thousand francs. He'd just try his luck once or twice more, and if he didn't win, he'd go home. He put a chip on sixteen, which was his eldest sister's age, but it didn't come up, then on twelve, which was his younger sister's, and that didn't come up either. He tried various numbers at random, but without success. It was funny, he seemed to have lost his knack. He thought he would try just once more and then stop, he won. He had made up all his losses and had something over. At the end of an hour, after various ups and downs, having experienced such thrills as he had never known in his life, he found himself with so many chips that they would hardly go in his pockets. He decided to go. He went to the changers' office, and he gasped when twenty thousand franc notes were spread out before him. He had never had so much money in his life. He put it in his pocket and was turning away when the woman to whom he had lent the thousand francs came up to him.

'I've been looking for you everywhere,' she said. 'I was afraid you'd gone. I was in a fever. I didn't know what you'd think of me. Here's your thousand francs and thank you so much for the loan.'

Nicky, blushing scarlet, stared at her with amazement. How he had misjudged her! His father had said, 'don't gamble, well, he had, and he'd made twenty thousand francs, and his father had said, 'don't lend anyone money, well, he had, he'd lent quite a lot to a total stranger, and she'd returned it. The fact was that he wasn't nearly such a fool as his father thought. He'd had an instinct that he could lend her the money with safety, and you see, his instinct was right. But he was so obviously taken aback that the little lady was forced to laugh.

'What is the matter with you?' she asked.

'To tell you the truth, I never expected to see the money back.'

'What did you take me for? Did you think I was a —cocotte?'

Nicky reddened to the roots of his wavy hair.

'No, of course not.'

'Do I look like one?'

'Not a bit.'

She was dressed very quietly, in black, with a string of gold beads round her neck. Her simple frock showed off a neat, slight figure. She had a pretty little face and a trim head. She was made up, but not excessively, and Nicky supposed that she

was not more than three or four years older than himself. She gave him a friendly smile.

'My husband is in the administration in Morocco, and I've come to Monte Carlo for a few weeks because he thought I wanted a change.'

'I was just going,' said Nicky, because he couldn't think of anything else to say.

'Already!'

'Well, I've got to get up early tomorrow. I'm going back to London by air.'

'Of course. The tournament ended today, didn't it? I saw you play, you know, two or three times.'

'Did you? I don't know why you should have noticed me.'

'You've got a beautiful style. And you looked very sweet in your shorts.'

Nicky was not an immodest youth, but it did cross his mind that perhaps she had borrowed that thousand francs in order to scrape acquaintance with him.

'Do you ever go to the Knickerbocker?' she asked.

'No, I never have.'

'Oh, but you mustn't leave Monte without having been there. Why don't you come and dance a little? To tell you the truth, I'm starving with hunger, and I should adore some bacon and eggs.'

Nicky remembered his father's advice not to have anything to do with women, but this was different. You had only to look at the pretty little thing to know at once that she was perfectly respectable. Her husband was in what corresponded, he supposed, to the civil service. His father and mother had friends who were civil servants, and they and their wives sometimes came to dinner. It was true that the wives were neither so young nor so pretty as this one, but she was just as ladylike as they were. And after winning twenty thousand francs, he thought it wouldn't be a bad idea to have a little fun.

'I'd love to go with you,' he said. 'But you won't mind if I don't stay very long. I've left instructions at my hotel that I'm to be called at seven.'

'We'll leave as soon as ever you like.'

Nicky found it very pleasant at the Knickerbocker. He ate his bacon and eggs with appetite. They shared a bottle of champagne. They danced, and the little lady told him he danced beautifully. He knew he danced pretty well, and of course she was easy to dance with. As light as a feather. She laid her cheek against his, and when their eyes met there was in hers a smile that made his heart go pit-a-pat. A coloured woman sang in a throaty, sensual voice. The floor was crowded.

'Have you ever been told that you're very good looking?' she asked.

'I don't think so,' he laughed. 'Gosh, he thought I believe she's fallen for me.'

Nicky was not such a fool as to be unaware that women often liked him and when she made that remark he pressed her to him a little more closely. She closed her eyes and a faint sigh escaped her lips.

I suppose it wouldn't be quite nice if I kissed you before all these people, he said.

What do you think they would take me for?

It began to grow late and Nicky said that really he thought he ought to be going.

I shall go too, she said. Will you drop me at my hotel on your way?

Nicky paid the bill. He was rather surprised at its amount but with all that money he had in his pocket he could afford not to care, and they got into a taxi. She snuggled up to him and he kissed her. She seemed to like it.

By Jove, he thought, 'I wonder if there's anything doing.'

It was true that she was a married woman but her husband was in Morocco and it certainly did look as if she'd fallen for him. Good and proper. It was true also that his father had warned him to have nothing to do with women but he reflected again he hadn't actually promised he wouldn't. He'd only promised not to forget his advice. Well, he hadn't, he was bearing it in mind that very minute. But circumstances alter cases. She was a sweet little thing, it seemed silly to miss the chance of an adventure when it was handed to you like that on a tray. When they reached the hotel he paid off the taxi.

I'll walk home, he said. The air will do me good after the stuffy atmosphere of that place.

Come up a moment, she said. I'd like to show you the photo of my little boy.

Oh, have you got a little boy? he exclaimed, a tiffle dashed.

Yes, a sweet little boy.

He walked upstairs after her. He didn't in the least want to see the photograph of her little boy but he thought it only civil to pretend he did. He was afraid he'd made a fool of himself. It occurred to him that she was taking him up to look at the photograph in order to show him in a nice way that he'd made a mistake. He'd told her he was eighteen.

I suppose she thinks I'm just a kid.

He began to wish he hadn't spent all that money on champagne at the night club.

But she didn't show him the photograph of her little boy after all. They had no sooner got into her room than she turned to him, flung her arms round his neck and kissed him full on the lips. He had never in all his life been kissed so passionately.

Darling, she said.

For a brief moment his father's advice once more crossed Nicky's mind and then he forgot it.

Nicky was a light sleeper and the least sound was apt to wake him. Two or three hours later he awoke and for a moment could not imagine where he was. The room was not quite dark for the door of the bathroom was ajar and the light in it had been left on. Suddenly he was conscious that someone was moving about the room. Then he remembered. He saw that it was his little friend and he was on the point of speaking when something in the way she was behaving stopped him. She was walking very cautiously, as though she were afraid of waking him. She stopped once or twice and looked over at the bed. He wondered what she was after. He soon saw. She went over to the chair on which he had placed his clothes and once more looked in his direction. She waited for what seemed to him an interminable time. The silence was so intense that Nicky thought he could hear his own heart beating. Then very slowly, very quietly, she took up his coat, slipped her hand into the inside pocket and drew out all those beautiful thousand franc notes that Nicky had been so proud to win. She put the coat back and placed some other clothes on it so that it should look as though it had not been disturbed. Then with the bundle of notes in her hand for an appreciable time stood once more stock still. Nicky had repressed an instinctive impulse to jump up and grab her. It was partly surprise that had kept him quiet, partly the notion that he was in a strange hotel in a foreign country and if he made a row he didn't know what might happen. She looked at him. His eyes were partly closed and he was sure that she thought he was asleep. In the silence she could hardly fail to hear his regular breathing. When she had reassured herself that her movements had not disturbed him, she stepped with infinite caution across the room. On a small table in the window a cineraria was growing in a pot. Nicky watched her now with his eyes wide open. The plant was evidently placed quite loosely in the pot for taking it by the stalks, she lifted it out, she put the bank notes in the bottom of the pot and replaced the plant. It was an excellent hiding place. No one could have guessed that anything was concealed under that richly flowering plant. She pressed the earth down with her fingers and then, very slowly, taking care not to make the smallest noise, crept across the room and slipped back into bed.

Chéri, she said in a caressing voice.

Nicky breathed steadily, like a man immersed in deep sleep. The little lady turned over on her side and disposed herself to slumber. But though Nicky lay so still his thoughts worked busily. He was extremely indignant at the scene he had just witnessed, and to himself he spoke his thoughts with vigour.

She's nothing but a damned tart. She and her dear little boy and her husband in Morocco. My eye!

She's a rotten thief that's what she is. Took me for a mug. If she thinks she's going to get away with anything like that, she's mistaken.

He had already made up his mind what he was going to do with the money he had so cleverly won. He had long wanted a car of his own and had thought it rather mean of his father not to have given him one. After all, a feller doesn't always want to dabble about in the family bus. Well, he'd just teach the old man a lesson and buy one himself. For twenty thousand francs, two hundred pounds roughly, he could get a very decent second-hand car. He meant to get the money back, but just then he didn't quite know how. He didn't like the idea of kicking up a row; he was a stranger in a hotel; he knew nothing of it; might very well be that the beastly woman had friends there; he didn't mind facing anyone in a fair fight, but he'd look pretty foolish if someone pulled a gun on him. He reflected, besides, very sensibly that he had no proof the money was his. If it came to a showdown and she swore it was hers, he might very easily find himself hauled off to a police station. He really didn't know what to do. Presently, by her regular breathing, he knew that the little lady was asleep. She must have fallen asleep with an easy mind for she had done her job without a hitch. It infuriated Nicky that she should rest so peacefully while he lay awake, worried to death. Suddenly an idea occurred to him. It was such a good one that it was only by the exercise of all his self-control that he prevented himself from jumping out of bed and carrying it out at once. Two could play at her game. She'd stolen his money, well, he'd steal it back again, and they'd be all square. He made up his mind to wait quite quietly until he was sure that deceitful woman was sound asleep. He waited for what seemed to him a very long time. She did not stir. Her breathing was as regular as a child's.

Darling, he said at last.

No answer. No movement. She was dead to the world. Very slowly, pausing after every movement, very silently, he slipped out of bed. He stood still for a while, looking at her to see whether he had disturbed her. Her breathing was as regular as before. During the time he was waiting, he had taken note carefully of the furniture in the room, so that in crossing it he should not knock against a chair or a table and make a noise. He took a couple of steps and waited; he took a couple of steps more; he was very light on his feet and made no sound as he walked; he took fully five minutes to get to the window and here he waited again. He started for the bed slightly creaked, but it was only because the sleeper turned in her sleep. He forced himself to wait till he had counted one hundred. She was sleeping like a log. With infinite care he seized the

cimera<sup>111</sup> by the stalks and gently pulled it out of the pot; he put his other hand in his heart, beat nineteen to the dozen as his fingers touched the notes; his hand closed on them and he slowly drew them out. He replaced the plant and in his turn carefully pressed down the earth. While he was doing all this, he had kept one eye on the form lying in the bed. It remained still. After another pause, he crept softly to the chair on which his clothes were lying. He first put the bundle of notes in his coat pocket and then proceeded to dress. It took him a good quarter of an hour, because he could afford to make no sound. He had been wearing a soft shirt with his dinner jacket, and he congratulated himself on this, because it was easier to put on silently than a stiff one. He had some difficulty in tying his tie without a looking glass, but he very wisely reflected that it didn't really matter if it wasn't tied very well. His spirits were rising. The whole thing now began to seem rather a lark. At length he was completely dressed except for his shoes, which he took in his hand; he thought he would put them on when he got into the passage. Now he had to cross the room to get to the door. He reached it so quietly that he could not have disturbed the lightest sleeper. But the door had to be unlocked. He turned the key very slowly; it creaked.

Who's that?

The little woman suddenly sat up in bed. Nicky's heart jumped to his mouth. He made a great effort to keep his head.

It's only me. It's six o'clock and I've got to go. I was trying not to wake you.

Oh, I forgot.

She sank back onto the pillow.

Now that you're awake, I'll put on my shoes.

He sat down on the edge of the bed and did this. Don't make a noise when you go out. The hotel people don't like it. Oh, I'm so sleepy.

You go right off to sleep again.

Kiss me before you go. He bent down and kissed her. You're a sweet boy and a wonderful lover. *Bon voyage*.

Nicky did not feel quite safe till he got out of the hotel. The dawn had broken. The sky was unclouded and in the harbour the yachts and the fishing boats lay motionless on the still water. On the quay fishermen were getting ready to start on their day's work. The streets were deserted. Nicky took a long breath of the sweet morning air. He felt alert and well. He also felt as pleased as Punch. With a swinging stride, his shoulders well thrown back, he walked up the hill and along the gardens in front of the Casino—the flowers in that clear light had a dewy brilliance that was delicious—till he came to his hotel. Here the day had already begun.

In the hall porters with muffers round their necks and berets on their heads were busy sweeping Nicky went up to his room and had a hot bath. He lay in it and thought with satisfaction that he was not such a mug as some people might think. After his bath he did his exercises, dressed, packed and went down to breakfast. He had a grand appetite. No continental breakfast for him! He had grapefruit porridge, bacon and eggs, rolls fresh from the oven, so crisp and delicious they melted in your mouth, marmalade and three cups of coffee. Though feeling perfectly well before, he felt better after that. He lit the pipe he had recently learnt to smoke, paid his bill and stepped into the car that was waiting to take him to the aerodrome on the other side of Cannes. The road as far as Nice ran over the hills and below him was the blue sea and the coast line. He couldn't help thinking it damned pretty. They passed through Nice so gay and friendly in the early morning and presently they came to a long stretch of straight road that ran by the sea. Nicky had paid his bill not with the money he had won the night before, but with the money his father had given him. He had changed a thousand francs to pay for supper at the Knickerbocker, but that deceitful little woman had returned him the thousand francs he had lent her, so that he still had twenty thousand-franc notes in his pocket. He thought he would like to have a look at them. He had so nearly lost them that they had a double value for him. He took them out of his hip pocket into which for safety's sake he had stuffed them when he put on the suit he was travelling in and counted them one by one. Something very strange had happened to them. Instead of there being twenty notes as there should have been, there were twenty-six. He couldn't understand it at all. He counted them twice more. There was no doubt about it, somehow or other he had twenty-six thousand francs instead of the twenty he should have had. He couldn't make it out. He asked himself if it was possible that he had won more at the Sporting Club than he had realized. But no, that was out of the question. He distinctly remembered the man at the desk laying the notes out in four rows of five and he had counted them himself. Suddenly the explanation occurred to him when he had put his hand into the flower pot after taking out the cineraria, he had grabbed everything he felt there. The flower pot was the little hussy's money box, and he had taken out not only his own money, but her savings as well. Nicky leant back in the car and burst into a roar of laughter. It was the funniest thing he had ever heard in his life. And when he thought of her going to the flower pot sometime later in the morning when she awoke, expecting to find the money she had so cleverly got away with and finding not only that it wasn't there, but that her own had gone

too, he laughed more than ever. And so far as he was concerned there was nothing to do about it. He knew neither her name nor the name of the hotel to which she had taken him. He couldn't return her money even if he wanted to.

It serves her damned well right, he said.

This then was the story that Henry Garnet told his friends over the bridge table for the night before, after dinner when his wife and daughter had left them to their port. Nicky had narrated it in full.

And you know what infuriated me is that he is so damned pleased with himself. Talk of a cat swallowing a canary. And do you know what he said to me when he'd finished? He looked at me with those innocent eyes of his and said, 'You know, Father, I can't help thinking there was something wrong about the advice you gave me. You said don't gamble, well I did, and I made a packet; you said don't lend money, well I did, and I got it back; and you said don't have anything to do with women, well I did, and I made six thousand francs on the deal.'

It didn't make it any better for Henry Garnet that his three companions burst out laughing.

It's all very well for you fellows to laugh, but you know I'm in a damned awkward position. The boy looked up to me, he respected me, he took whatever I said as gospel truth, and now I saw it in his eyes, he just looks upon me as a drivelling old fool. It's no good my saying one swallow doesn't make a summer, he doesn't see that it was just a fluke, he thinks the whole thing was due to his own cleverness. It may ruin him.

You do look a bit of a damned fool, old man, said one of the others. There's no denying that, is there?

I know I do, and I don't like it. It's so dashed unfair. Fate has no right to play one tricks like that. After all, you must admit that my advice was good.

Very good.

And the wretched boy ought to have burnt his fingers. Well, he hasn't. You're all men of the world, you tell me how I'm to deal with the situation now.

But they none of them could.

Well, Henry, if I were you I wouldn't worry, said the lawyer. My belief is that your boy's born lucky, and in the long run that's better than to be born clever or rich.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 List the character traits of Nicky and note how many are related to the problem of the story.
- 2 Maugham is suggesting an irony that moral advice disregarded produces happiness. How legitimate and



how deep, is the insight into experience which this irony provides?

3 To what extent is Nickys father a central figure in the story?

4 What effect do you think Nickys experiences will have upon his future views of ethics and morality?

5 The father's concern over the possible adverse effects of Nicky's adventures is expressed by Maugham in terms of bad play at bridge and a somewhat edgy temper. How do you account for the triviality of these effects as compared to the serious problem which worries the father?



and astute he stands above the ordinary generality of men. He operates in many cases outside the law that is he is often opposed to the police as well as to the criminal and he stands for a kind of abstract justice which the organized forces of society are not always able to understand or to enforce. Often the protagonist of the detective story is the criminal rather than the detective and this tendency has given rise to the asocial brutal type of novel which we encounter in the so called tough guy fiction of late years. Whether it is with his reasoning powers his heroic strength his concept of justice his essential isolation from society his individual integrity his personal morality his bravery or his flouting of the usual rules the modern reader identifies himself easily with the detective protagonist. This tells us something about the nature of detective fiction but it tells us more about ourselves and our times.

# Aristotle on Detective Fiction

*Dorothy L Sayers*

In this witty and intelligent essay, Dorothy Sayers—herself a successful writer of detective fiction—applies the principles laid down by Aristotle to the modern detective story and in so doing has produced not only a perceptive parallel but has shed light upon the form of this literature which is so popular in our day.

It is common to find among persons of recently acquired cultural background a tendency to derogate detective fiction as something which is perhaps interesting and exciting but which has no real literary value. It is even considered presumptuous to discuss the detective story in literary terms as if it were an unsuccessful down-at-the-heels relative who has shown up at the house for Christmas and whom it is necessary to keep under discreet cover. Yet as Miss Sayers points out so ably the detective fiction of our day is an important form which in many respects proceeds along classical lines and which certainly offers examples of excellent writing. The intelligent people who read detective stories surely must find in them something more than mere vicarious adventure.

One of the aspects which make detective stories susceptible to careful analysis in traditional terms is the fact that they tend to be written in a fairly rigid form. There is in the detective story a pattern which though it has changed constantly in the past forty years distinguishes it as a very special type of writing with its own assumptions and rules.

If we consider for a moment the enormous appeal which detective fiction has for so many people we must conclude that it is due to something more than its exciting nature. The detective hero is a special man, festation in many ways of our own times—intelligent

(Lecture delivered at Oxford March 5th 1935)<sup>1</sup>

SOME twenty five years ago it was rather the fashion among commentators to deplore that *ANIS* totle should have so much inclined to admire a kind of tragedy that was not in their opinion the best. All this stress laid upon the plot all this hankering after melodrama and surprise—was it not rather unbecoming—rather inartistic? Psychology for its own sake was just then coming to the fore and it seemed almost blasphemous to assert that they do not act in order to portray the characters they include the characters for the sake of the action. Indeed we are not yet free from the influence of that school of thought for which the best kind of play or story is that in which nothing particular happens from beginning to end.

Now to anyone who reads the *Poetics* with an unbiased mind it is evident that Aristotle was not so much a student of his own literature as a prophet of the future. He criticised the contemporary Greek theatre because it was at that time the most readily available, widespread and democratic form of popular entertainment presented for his attention. But what in his heart of hearts he desired was a good detective story and it was not his fault, poor man, that he lived some twenty centuries too early to revel in the Perpetries of *Trent's Last Case* or the Discoveries of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. He had a stout appetite for the gruesome. Though the objects themselves may be painful, says he, we delight to view the most realistic representations of them in art, the forms, for example, of the lowest animals and of dead bodies. The crawling horror of *The Speckled Band* would we infer have pleased him no less than *The Corpse in Cold Storage* or

<sup>1</sup> The translation of *The Poetics* used throughout this lecture is that of Professor Ingram Bywater published by the Clarendon Press.



*The Body in the Silo* Yet he was no thriller fan Of simple plots and actions he rightly observes the episodic are the worst I call a plot episodic when there is neither probability nor necessity in the sequence of the episodes He would not have approved of a certain recent book which includes among its incidents a machine gun attack in Park Lane an aeroplane dropping bombs on Barnes Common<sup>2</sup> a gas attack by the C I D on a West End flat and a pitched battle with assorted artillery on a yacht in the Solent He maintained that dreadful and alarming events produced their best effect when they occurred unexpectedly indeed but also in consequence of one another In one phrase he sums up the whole essence of the detective story proper Speaking of the denouement of the work he says It is also possible to discover whether some one has done or not done something Yes indeed

Now it is well known that a man of transcendent genius though working under difficulties and with inadequate tools will do more useful and inspiring work than a man of mediocre intellect with all the resources of the laboratory at his disposal Thus Aristotle with no better mysteries for his study than the sordid complications of the Agamemnon family no more scientific murder methods than the poisoned arrow of Philoctetes or the somewhat improbable medical properties of Medea's cauldron above all with detective heroes so painfully stereotyped and unsympathetic as the inhuman array of gods from the machine yet contrived to hammer out from these unpromising elements a theory of detective fiction so shrewd all embracing and practical that the *Poetics* remains the finest guide to the writing of such fiction that could be put at this day, into the hands of an aspiring author

In what then does this guidance consist? From the start Aristotle accepts the Detective Story as a worthy subject for serious treatment Tragedy he observes (tragedy being the literary form which the detective story took in his day) also acquired magnitude—that is it became important both in form and substance Discarding short stories and a ludicrous diction it assumed though only at a late point in its progress a tone of dignity I am afraid that short stories and a ludicrous diction have characterised some varieties of the *genre* up to a very late point indeed it is true however that there have recently been great efforts at reform Aristotle then goes on to define tragedy in terms excellently applicable to our subject The Imitation (or presentment, or representation—we will not quarrel over the word) of an action that is serious—it will be admitted that murder is an

action of a tolerably serious nature—and also complete in itself—that is highly important since a detective story that leaves any loose ends is no proper detective story at all—with incidents arousing pity and fear wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions

Too much has already been said and written on the vexed subject of the catharsis Is it true, as magistrates sometimes assert that little boys go to the bad through reading detective stories? Or is it as detective writers prefer to think with Aristotle, that in a nerve ridden age the study of crime stories provides a safety valve for the bloodthirsty passions that might otherwise lead us to murder our spouses? Of all forms of modern fiction the detective story alone makes virtue *ex hypothesi* more interesting than vice the detective more beloved than the criminal But there is a dangerous error going about—namely that if detective fiction leads to an increase in crime, then the greater the literary merit the greater will be the corresponding increase in crime<sup>3</sup> Now this is simply not true few people can have been inspired to murder their uncles by the literary merits of *Hamlet* On the contrary where there is no beauty there can be no catharsis an ill written book like an ill compounded drug only irritates the system without purging Let us then see to it that if we excite evil passions it is so done as to sublimate them at the same time by the contemplation of emotional or intellectual beauty Thus far then concerning the catharsis

Aristotle next discusses Plot and Character A detective story we gather, is impossible without action but there may be one without character A few years ago the tendency was for all detective stories to be of the characterless or draught board variety today we get many examples exhibiting a rather slender plot and a good deal of morbid psychology Aristotle's warning, however still holds good

One may string together a series of characteristic speeches of the utmost finish as regards diction and thought and yet fail to produce the true dramatic effect but one will have much better success with a story which however inferior in these respects has a plot

And, again

The first essential the life and soul so to speak of the detective story is the plot and the characters come second

As regards the make up of the plot, Aristotle is again very helpful He says firmly that it should have a beginning a middle and an end Herein the detective story is sharply distinguished from the kind of modern novel which beginning at the end

<sup>2</sup> It is perhaps necessary to remind readers that this kind of incident though it has since become quite commonplace was unusual at the date (1935) when this paper was first written

<sup>3</sup> Editorial in *The Author* spring 1935

rambles backwards and forwards without particular direction and ends on an indeterminate note and for no ascertainable reason except the publishers' refusal to provide more printing and paper for seven and sixpence. The detective story commonly begins with the murder, the middle is occupied with the detection of the crime and the various peripeties or reversals of fortune arising out of this, the end is the discovery and execution of the murderer—than which nothing can very well be more final. Our critic adds that the work should be of a convenient length. If it is too short he says our perception of it becomes indistinct. (This is meiosis; he might have said that it will not be perceived at all since the library subscriber will flatly refuse to take it out on the ground that there isn't enough reading in it.) He objects still more strongly to the work that is of vast size or one thousand miles long. A story or plot he reminds us must be of some length but of a length to be taken in by the memory. A man *might* write a detective story of the length of *Ulysses*<sup>4</sup> but, if he did, the reader would not be able to bear all the scattered clues in mind from the first chapter to the last and the effect of the final discovery would be lost. In practice a length of from 80 000 to 120 000 words is desirable if the book is to sell and this is enough to allow in Aristotle's general formula of the hero's passing by a series of probable or necessary stages from misfortune to happiness or from happiness to misfortune. Later, however, he conveys a very necessary warning. A writer often stretches out a plot beyond its capabilities and is thus obliged to twist the sequence of incident. It is unwise to write up a short story type of plot to novel length, even to fulfil a publisher's contract.

The next section of the *Poetics* gives advice about the unity of the plot. It is not necessary to tell us everything that ever befell the hero. For example, says Aristotle, in writing about Sherlock Holmes (I have slightly adapted the instance he gives)—

the author does not trouble to say where the hero was born or whether he was educated at Oxford or Cambridge nor does he enter into details about incidents which—though we know they occurred—are not relevant to the matter in hand such as the cases of Vamerry the Wine Merchant, the Aluminum Crutch, Wilson the Notorious Canary-Trainer or Isadora Persano and the Remarkable Worm.

The story, he says—

must represent one action, a complete whole with its several incidents so closely connected that the transposal or withdrawal of any one of them will disjoin and dislocate the whole.

<sup>4</sup> I refer of course to Mr. James Joyce's novel, not to Homer's poetical treatment of the subject.

In other words, murder your darlings—or if you must write a purple passage, take care to include in it some vital clue to the solution which cannot be omitted or transposed to any other part of the story. Thus in *Trent's Last Case* the description of Marlowe's room conveys the necessary clue that he has been a member of the O.U.D.S. and is therefore to be presumed capable of acting a part in the poker game in *The Canary Murder Case* throws needful light on the murderer's character; the picture of the Shivering Sands in *The Moonstone* prepares us for the discovery of the paint-stained nightgown in that spot, and so forth.

But now comes the important question: What kind of plot are we to choose? And this raises the great central opposition of the Probable and the Possible. It is *possible* that two Negroes should co-exist so much alike as not only to deceive the eye, but to possess the same Bertillon measurements, that they should both bear the same Christian and surnames and that they should both be confined in the same prison at the same time: it is possible since it actually occurred.<sup>5</sup> But if we are to found a plot upon such a series of coincidences it will have an improbable appearance.

It is open to us to contrive stories based upon such incidents in real life, either giving the characters their real names or otherwise calling upon the witness of history. Thus there have been books founded on the Bravo case, the Crippen murder, the Penge tragedy, the case of W. H. Wallace and so on. When the facts are well known the reader will accept the events as narrated. But it often turns out that the stories so written appear less convincing than those that are wholly invented, and it is frequently necessary to add inventions to the known facts in order to make these true events appear probable. So that says Aristotle, one must not aim at a rigid adherence to the traditional stories, particularly as even the known stories are known only to a few. Thus even where the possibility cannot be challenged, probability should be studied.

But where both names and incidents are invented, then a likely impossibility is always preferable to an unconvincing possibility. It may be impossible that the leaden bullet buried in a man's body should be chemically recovered from his ashes after cremation, but, by skilful use of scientific language, Dr. Austin Freeman persuades us that it is probable and indeed inevitable. Whereas when an author seeks to persuade us that a pleasant young Cambridge man of gentle birth is affronted by being asked to take his place in a queue behind a taxi-driver or some such person, the incident, though physically possible, offends by its improbability, being contrary to

<sup>5</sup> The case of the two Will Wests, U.S. Penitentiary, Leavenworth, Kansas, 1903.

the English character whose eternal patience in arranging itself in orderly queues is well known to amount to genius. The story says Aristotle should never be made up of improbable incidents: there should be nothing of the sort in it. Lest this seem too severe, he suggests as a practical compromise that if such incidents are unavoidable they should be kept outside the action. Thus in the story of *The Gloria Scott* while the previous history of Old Trevor is not merely improbable but according to the dates given impossible, we do not notice this in reading because the episode stands outside the action of the plot. Similarly, as regards the characters, the impossible probable is better than the improbable possible, for (says Aristotle again) if a detective such as Conan Doyle described be impossible, the answer is that it is better he should be like that, since the artist ought to improve on his model.

In the matter of scientific detail, Aristotle is all for accuracy. If, he says, in effect you cannot attain your artistic end without some impossible device (such as the instantaneously fatal and undiscoverable poison), then at a pinch you may be justified in using it.

If, however, the poetic end might have been as well or better attained without sacrifice of technical correctness in such matters, the impossibility is not to be justified, since the description should be, if it can, entirely free from error.

Thus in Mr. John Rhodes' *The Corpse in the Car*, the emission of an undetectable gas from the wireless set is more justifiable because scientifically feasible than the same author's release of hydrocyanic acid gas from a rubber hot water bottle in *Poison for One*, a method which (I am told) would not be effective in practice.

Concerning the three necessary parts of a detective plot—peripety, or reversal of fortune, discovery, and suffering—Aristotle has many very just observations. On suffering, we need not dwell long. Aristotle defines it as action of a destructive or painful nature, such as murders, tortures, woundings, and the like. These are common enough in the detective story, and the only remark to be made is that they ought always to help on the action in some way and not be put in merely to harrow the feelings, still less to distract attention from a weakness in the plot.

A reversal of fortune may happen to all or any of the characters: the victim—who is frequently a man of vast wealth—may be reduced to the status of a mere dead body, or may again turn out not to be dead after all as we had supposed. The wrongly suspected person, after undergoing great misfortunes, may be saved from the condemned cell and restored to the arms of his betrothed. The detective, after

several errors of reasoning, may hit upon the right solution. Such peripeties keep the story moving and arouse alternating emotions of terror, compassion, and so forth in the reader. These events are best brought about not fortuitously but by some *hamartia* or defect in the sufferer. The defect may be of various kinds. The victim may suffer on account of his unamiable character, or through the error of marrying a wicked person, or through foolishly engaging in dubious finance, or through the mistake of possessing too much money. The innocent suspect may have been fool enough to quarrel with the victim, or to bring suspicion on himself by suppressing evidence with intent to shield somebody. The detective suffers his worries and difficulties through some failure of observation or logic. All these kinds of defect are fruitful in the production of peripety.

Aristotle mentions many varieties of the discovery which forms the denouement. This is usually the discovery either of the identity of the murderer, or of the means by which the crime was committed.

(1) The worst kind are *discoveries made by the author himself*. These are indeed so inartistic as to be scarcely permissible in the true detective story; they belong to the thriller. It is, however, possible, where the villain's identity is known, to make an agreeable story by showing the moves and counter-moves made successively by villain and detective (Wilkie Collins in *No Name*, Austin Freeman in *The Singing Bone*).

(2) The *discovery by material signs and tokens* is very common. In *The Trial of Mary Dugan*, the discovery that a person is left-handed leads to his conviction. In *The Eye of Osiris*, the identity of the (supposed) Egyptian mummy with the missing corpse is proved by the discovery of identical tooth-stoppings and a Potts fracture in both.

(3) *Discovery through memory* is also used: thus in *Unnatural Death*, the murder method—the production of an air lock in a main artery—is discovered to the detective by his memory of a similar air lock in the petrol feed of a motor cycle.

(4) *Discovery through reasoning* is perhaps most common of all: the murderer was in the house at such a time, he is an electrician, he is tall and smokes Sobranie cigarettes, only X corresponds to all these indications; therefore X is the murderer.

(5) Aristotle's fifth type of discovery is particularly interesting. He calls it *discovery through bad reasoning by the other party*. The instance he adduces is obscure, the text being apparently mutilated and referring to a play unknown. But I think he really means to describe the *discovery by bluff*. Thus the detective shows the suspect a weapon, saying, 'If you are not the murderer, how do you come to be in possession of this weapon?' The suspect

surprise at his detection. So, too, as regards the innocent suspects and the police in treating all such characters, a certain resemblance to real life is on the whole to be desired. Lastly, and most important and difficult of all, the characters must be *consistent* from first to last. Even though at the end we are to feel surprise on discovering the identity of the criminal, we ought not to feel incredulity; we should rather be able to say to ourselves: Yes, I can see *now* that from the beginning this man had it in him to commit murder, had I only had the wits to interpret the indications furnished by the author. Thus, the villainy of the apparently amiable father in *The Copper Beeches* is betrayed by his participation in his offspring's cruel enjoyment in the slaughter of flies, and the character is seen to be consistent. In consistency in the characters destroys the probability of the action, and indeed, amounts to a breach of the rule of fair play, since we are entitled to believe that a character remains the same person from beginning to end of the story, and *nemo repente fuit turpissimus*.

This discourse is already too long. Let me remind myself of Aristotle's own warning. There are many writers who, after a good complication, fail to bring off the denouement. This is painfully true of detective stories; it has also some application to lectures and speeches upon whatever occasion. But indeed everything that Aristotle says about writing and composition is pregnant with a fundamental truth, an inner rightness that makes it applicable to all forms of literary art, from the most trivial to the most exalted. He had, as we say, the root of the matter in him, and any writer who tries to make a detective story a work of art at all will do well if he writes it in such a way that Aristotle could have enjoyed and approved it.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What sort of writing is Dorothy Sayers satirizing in this essay?
2. To what extent are Aristotle's statements applicable to detective fiction?
3. Is there a form of detective fiction which has its own set rules, or is each detective story different in approach?
4. What changes, if any, have taken place in detective fiction from the days of Sherlock Holmes to the modern private eye?
5. Many famous and great men, including President Roosevelt, have read detective stories in large numbers. What do you think is the appeal which a detective story may have to an intelligent mind?
6. Dorothy Sayers, a fine scholar and translator of Dante, G. D. H. Cole, an excellent political scientist, and many other outstanding men and women have written detective stories. Does Miss Sayers' essay shed any light on why they may have chosen to do so?

7. It has been said that there is little or no tragedy in modern writing. Does Miss Sayers suggest any areas in which tragedy, in a modified form, may be found?



## The Gold-Bug\*

Edgar Allan Poe

The history of the development of Poe's reputation as a major literary figure sheds interesting light upon the nature of critical reception. In his own day, largely because of certain irregularities in behavior and habits which marked his personal life, Poe was not a respectable writer in select circles of American society. As a consequence, much of the significance of his writing was overlooked in his own land until, as the result of his appearance in French translation, Americans became aware of the fact that in Poe our literature had developed a figure of world-wide importance. Poe's major influence in France was in the field of poetry. Baudelaire, the famous author of *Fleurs du Mal*, called him one of the greatest poets ever to write, and while we might quarrel with so sweeping a statement, we cannot quarrel with the fact that Poe exercised a decisive and important influence upon the development of French poetry in the nineteenth century. His short stories, however, were not without their own effect abroad, and many of the European tales of deduction and ratiocination—including those of the famous Sherlock Holmes—owe much to this particular aspect of Poe's contribution in the field of short fiction.

The short stories of Poe fall into two main classifications: stories of deduction and logic, and so-called Gothic stories. The Gothic story is a type of story which originated in Germany and was expressed in America by Charles Brockden Brown and Washington Irving among others. In general, the Gothic tale is laid in mysterious and gloomy surroundings, often an old castle or a decayed house in the country. The atmosphere is almost always dark, nightmarish, full of rain, noise, and odd rustlings. The hero is normally a deranged, feverish young man, clammy and pale, suffering from a variety of mental and nervous disorders of a permanent or hereditary order. Roderick Usher in *The Fall of the House of Usher* is an excellent example of the type. The hero, in addition to his disordered state of mind, is normally highly intellectual in his interests, obsessed in one form or another with the supernatural forces of nature and interested in such occult practices as that of communicating with the dead. To this genre

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of story the contribution of Poe is important but he did not invent it nor in effect did he do more than carry some of the earlier tradition further than it had gone before

The stories of deduction however were in many ways developed and brought to perfection by Poe These stories all represent a puzzle to be solved—a murder a cryptogram the location of a buried treasure The puzzle in whatever fictional form it is presented is susceptible to solution by the rigorous application of logical deduction and the principal interest in the reader's mind lies more in the fascination he has with the process than in the nature of the solution Logical deduction of course is the application of the same rules as those which govern the scientific method the problem is analyzed hypotheses are made and rejected classifications are reduced from the more general to the more particular until ultimately a solution is found which is inevitable and exclusive Such a story implies a certain contract between the author and the reader that all of the material required for the solution will be given and that no surprises tricks or introduction of irrelevant material will be permitted

One of the consequences of this form of story is that there is virtually no place for the development of character emotion or affection The nature of the puzzle solver or detective—his morality his attitudes his philosophy of life his humanity—is by definition irrelevant to the solution of the problem and since this is so there is no fictional purpose to be served by paying attention to it The sole characteristic which the hero must have is the ability to use his reason cleanly and sharply all else since it cannot affect the story is most often and most properly omitted For this reason many of the elements which were suggested in the section on the short story as being of prime importance become secondary in importance in the genre of the rational story of deduction

*The Gold Bug* is an excellent example of the genre With the other stories of Poe in this field it set a fashion in the uses of reason which was to remain significant for many later generations

What ho! what ho! this fellow is dancing mad!  
He hath been bitten by the Tarantula

*All in the Wrong*

MANY years ago I contracted an intimacy with a Mr William Legrand He was of an ancient Hugue not family, and had once been wealthy but a series of misfortunes had reduced him to want To avoid the mortification consequent upon his disasters, he left New Orleans the city of his forefathers and took up his residence at Sullivan's Island near Charleston South Carolina

This island is a very singular one It consists of little else than the sea sand, and is about three miles long Its breadth at no point exceeds a quarter of

a mile It is separated from the mainland by a scarcely perceptible creek oozing its way through a wilderness of reeds and slime a favorite resort of the marsh hen The vegetation as might be supposed is scant or at least dwarfish No trees of any magnitude are to be seen Near the western extremity where Fort Moultrie stands and where are some miserable frame buildings tenanted during summer by the fugitives from Charleston dust and fever may be found, indeed the bristly palmetto but the whole island, with the exception of this western point and a line of hard, white beach on the sea-coast is covered with a dense undergrowth of the sweet myrtle so much prized by the horticulturists of England The shrub here often attains the height of fifteen or twenty feet and forms an almost impenetrable coppice burthening the air with its fragrance

In the inmost recesses of this coppice not far from the eastern or more remote end of the island Legrand had built himself a small hut which he occupied when I first by mere accident made his acquaintance This soon ripened into friendship—for there was much in the recluse to excite interest and esteem I found him well educated with unusual powers of mind but infected with misanthropy and subject to perverse moods of alternate enthusiasm and melancholy He had with him many books but rarely employed them His chief amusements were gunning and fishing, or sauntering along the beach and through the myrtles in quest of shells or entomological specimens—his collection of the latter might have been envied by a Swammerdamm In these excursions he was usually accompanied by an old negro called Jupiter who had been manumitted before the reverses of the family but who could be induced neither by threats nor by promises to abandon what he considered his right of attendance upon the footsteps of his young Massa Will It is not improbable that the relatives of Legrand concerning him to be somewhat unsettled in intellect had contrived to instil this obstinacy into Jupiter with a view to the supervision and guardianship of the wanderer

The winters in the latitude of Sullivan's Island are seldom very severe, and in the fall of the year it is a rare event indeed when a fire is considered necessary About the middle of October 18—there occurred however a day of remarkable chilliness Just before sunset I scrambled my way through the evergreens to the hut of my friend whom I had not visited for several weeks—my residence being, at that time in Charleston, a distance of nine miles from the island while the facilities of passage and repassage were very far behind those of the present day Upon reaching the hut I rapped as was my custom, and getting no reply sought for the key

where I knew it was secreted, unlocked the door and went in. A fine fire was blazing upon the hearth. It was a novelty and by no means an ungrateful one. I threw off an overcoat, took an arm chair by the crackling logs and awaited patiently the arrival of my hosts.

Soon after dark they arrived, and gave me a most cordial welcome. Jupiter grinning from ear to ear, bustled about to prepare some marsh hens for supper. Legrand was in one of his fits—how else shall I term them?—of enthusiasm. He had found an unknown bivalve forming a new genus and more than this he had hunted down and secured, with Jupiter's assistance, a *scarabæus* which he believed to be totally new but in respect to which he wished to have my opinion on the morrow.

And why not to night? I asked, rubbing my hands over the blaze and wishing the whole tribe of *scarabæi* at the devil.

Ah if I had only known you were here! said Legrand, but it's so long since I saw you, and how could I foresee that you would pay me a visit this very night of all others? As I was coming home I met Lieutenant G—, from the fort and very foolishly, I lent him the bug so it will be impossible for you to see it until the morning. Stay here to-night and I will send Jup down for it at sunrise. It is the loveliest thing in creation!

What?—sunrise?

Nonsense! no!—the bug. It is of a brilliant gold color—about the size of a large hickory nut—with two jet black spots near one extremity of the back and another, somewhat longer, at the other. The *antennæ* are—

De y aint no tin in him. Massa Will I keep a tellin' on you here interrupted Jupiter. de bug is a goole bug solid ebbery bit of him inside and all sep him wing—neber feel half so hebby a bug in my life.

Well, suppose it is. Jup replied Legrand somewhat more earnestly it seemed to me than the case demanded, is that any reason for your letting the birds burn? The color—here he turned to me—is really almost enough to warrant Jupiter's idea. You never saw a more brilliant metallic lustre than the scales emit—but of this you cannot judge till tomorrow. In the meantime I can give you some idea of the shape. Saying this, he seated himself at a small table on which were a pen and ink but no paper. He looked for some in a drawer but found none.

Never mind, he said at length, this will answer and he drew from his waistcoat pocket a scrap of what I took to be very dirty foolscap, and made upon it a rough drawing with the pen. While he did this I retained my seat by the fire for I was still chilly. When the design was complete he handed it to me without rising. As I received it, a loud growl

was heard, succeeded by a scratching at the door. Jupiter opened it, and a large Newfoundland belonging to Legrand rushed in leaped upon my shoulders and loaded me with caresses for I had shown him much attention during previous visits. When his gambols were over I looked at the paper and to speak the truth found myself not a little puzzled at what my friend had depicted.

Well! I said after contemplating it for some minutes, this is a strange *scarabæus*. I must confess new to me never saw any thing like it before—unless it was a skull or a death's head, which it more nearly resembles than any thing else that has come under my observation.

A death's head! echoed Legrand. Oh—yes—well it has something of that appearance upon paper no doubt. The two upper black spots look like eyes eh? and the longer one at the bottom like a mouth—and then the shape of the whole is oval.

Perhaps so said I but Legrand, I fear you are no artist. I must wait until I see the beetle itself if I am to form any idea of its personal appearance.

Well I don't know said he a little nettled. I draw tolerably—*should* do it at least—have had good masters and flatter myself that I am not quite a blockhead.

But, my dear fellow you are joking then said I, this is a very passable *skull*—indeed I may say that it is a very *excellent* skull, according to the vulgar notions about such specimens of physiology—and your *scarabæus* must be the queerest *scarabæus* in the world if it resembles it. Why we may get up a very thrilling bit of superstition upon this hint. I presume you will call the bug *scarabæus caput hominis* or something of that kind—there are many similar titles in the Natural Histories. But where are the *antennæ* you spoke of?

The *antennæ*! said Legrand, who seemed to be getting unaccountably warm upon the subject. I am sure you must see the *antennæ*. I made them as distinct as they are in the original insect and I presume that is sufficient.

Well well I said perhaps you have—still I don't see them, and I handed him the paper without additional remark not wishing to ruffle his temper but I was much surprised at the turn affairs had taken. His ill humor puzzled me—and as for the drawing of the beetle there were positively *no antennæ* visible and the whole *did* bear a very close resemblance to the ordinary cuts of a death's-head.

He received the paper very peevishly and was about to crumple it apparently to throw it in the fire, when a casual glance at the design seemed suddenly to rivet his attention. In an instant his face grew violently red—in another as excessively pale. For some minutes he continued to scrutinize the drawing minutely where he sat. At length he arose,

took a candle from the table and proceeded to seat himself upon a sea-chest in the farthest corner of the room. Here again he made an anxious examination of the paper turning it in all directions. He said nothing however, and his conduct greatly astonished me yet I thought it prudent not to exacerbate the growing moodiness of his temper by any comment. Presently he took from his coat pocket a wallet placed the paper carefully in it, and deposited both in a writing-desk which he locked. He now grew more composed in his demeanor but his original air of enthusiasm had quite disappeared. Yet he seemed not so much sulky as abstracted. As the evening wore away he became more and more absorbed in reverie from which no sallies of mine could arouse him. It had been my intention to pass the night at the hut as I had frequently done before but seeing my host in this mood I deemed it proper to take leave. He did not press me to remain but as I departed he shook my hand with even more than his usual cordiality.

It was about a month after this (and during the interval I had seen nothing of Legrand) when I received a visit at Charleston from his man Jupiter. I had never seen the good old negro look so dispirited and I feared that some serious disaster had befallen my friend.

Well, Jup said I what is the matter now?—how is your master?

Why, to speak de troof massa him not so berry well as mought be.

Not well! I am truly sorry to hear it. What does he complain of?

Dar! dat s it!—him nebei plain of notin—but him berry sick for all dat.

Very sick Jupiter!—why didn't you say so at once? Is he confined to bed?

No dat he aint!—he aint find nowhar—dat s just whar de shoe pinch—my mind is got to be berry hebby bout poor Massa Will.

Jupiter I should like to understand what it is you are talking about. You say your master is sick. Hasn't he told you what ails him?

Why, massa taint worf while for to git mad about de matter—Massa Will say noffin at all aint de matter wid him—but den what make him go about looking dis here way wid he head down and he soldiers up, and as white as a gose? And den he keep a syphon all de time—

Keeps a what, Jupiter?

Keeps a syphon wid de figgurs on de slate—de queeiest figgurs I ebber did see. Ise gittin to be skeered I tell you. Hab for to keep mighty tight eye pon him noovers. Todder day he gib me slip fore de sun up and was gone de whole ob de blessed day. I had a big stick ready cut for to gib him deuced good beating when he did come—but Ise sich a fool

dat I hadn't de heart arter all—he looked so berry poorly.

Eh?—what?—ah yes!—upon the whole I think you had better not be too severe with the poor fellow—don't flog him Jupiter—he can't very well stand it—but can you form no idea of what has occasioned this illness, or rather this change of conduct? Has any thing unpleasant happened since I saw you?

No massa dey aint bin noffin onpleasant *since* den—twas *fore* den I'm feared—twas de berry day you was dare.

How? what do you mean?

Why massa, I mean de bug—dare now.

The what?

De bug—I'm berry saittin dat Massa Will bin bit somewhere bout de head by dat goole bug.

And what cause have you Jupiter, for such a supposition?

Claws enuff massa and mouff too. I nebber did see sich a deuced bug—he kick and he bite ebery ting what cum near him. Massa Will cotch him fuss but had for to let him go gin mighty quick. I tell you—den was de time he must ha got de bite. I didn't like de look ob de bug mouff myself no-how so I wouldn't take hold ob him wid my finger, but I cotch him wid a piece ob paper dat I found. I rap him up in de paper and stuff a piece of it in he mouff—dat was de way.

And you think then that your master was really bitten by the beetle and that the bite made him sick?

I don't think noffin about it—I nose it. What make him dream bout de goole so much if taint cause he bit by de goole bug. Ise heerd bout dem goole bugs fore dis.

But how do you know he dreams about gold?

How I know? why, cause he talk about it in he sleep—dat s how I nose.

Well Jup, perhaps you are right but to what fortunate circumstance am I to attribute the honor of a visit from you to day?

What de matter massa?

Did you bring any message from Mr Legrand?

No massa, I bring dis her pissel and here Jupiter handed me a note which ran thus

MY DEAR—

Why have I not seen you for so long a time? I hope you have not been so foolish as to take offence at any little *brusquerie* of mine but no that is improbable.

Since I saw you I have had great cause for anxiety. I have something to tell you yet scarcely know how to tell it, or whether I should tell it at all.

I have not been quite well for some days past.



and poor old Jup annoys me almost beyond endurance by his well meant attentions. Would you believe it?—he had prepared a huge stick the other day with which to chastise me for giving him the slip and spending the day, *solus*, among the hills on the main land. I verily believe that my ill looks alone saved me a flogging.

I have made no addition to my cabinet since we met.

If you can in any way, make it convenient, come over with Jupiter. Do come. I wish to see you *to night*, upon business of importance. I assure you that it is of the *highest* importance.

Ever yours,

WILLIAM LEGRAND

There was something in the tone of this note which gave me great uneasiness. Its whole style differed materially from that of Legrand. What could he be dreaming of? What new crotchet possessed his excitable brain? What business of the highest importance could *he* possibly have to transact? Jupiter's account of him boded no good. I dreaded lest the continued pressure of misfortune had at length fairly unsettled the reason of my friend. Without a moment's hesitation therefore I prepared to accompany the negro.

Upon reaching the wharf I noticed a scythe and three spades all apparently new lying in the bottom of the boat in which we were to embark.

What is the meaning of all this, Jup? I inquired. Him syfe massa and spade.

Very true, but what are they doing here?

Him de syfe and de spade what Massa Will sipon my buying for him in de town and de debbil's own lot of money I had to gib for em.

But what in the name of all that is mysterious is your Massa Will going to do with scythes and spades?

Dat's more dan I know and debbil take me if I don't believe tis more dan he know too. But it's all cum ob de bug.

Finding that no satisfaction was to be obtained of Jupiter whose whole intellect seemed to be absorbed by de bug I now stepped into the boat, and made sail. With a fair and strong breeze we soon ran into the little cove to the northward of Fort Moultrie and a walk of some two miles brought us to the hut. It was about three in the afternoon when we arrived. Legrand had been waiting us in eager expectation. He grasped my hand with a nervous *empressement* which alarmed me and strengthened the suspicions already entertained. His countenance was pale even to ghastliness and his deep-set eyes glared with unnatural lustre. After some inquiries respecting his health I asked him,

not knowing what better to say, if he had yet obtained the *scarabæus* from Lieutenant G——

Oh yes, he replied colouring violently. I got it from him the next morning. Nothing should tempt me to part with that *scarabæus*. Do you know that Jupiter is quite right about it?

In what way? I asked with a sad foreboding at heart.

In supposing it to be a bug of *real gold*. He said this with an air of profound seriousness and I felt inexpressibly shocked.

This bug is to make my fortune, he continued with a triumphant smile to reinstate me in my family possessions. Is it any wonder, then, that I prize it? Since Fortune has thought fit to bestow it upon me I have only to use it properly and I shall arrive at the gold of which it is the index. Jupiter, bring me that *scarabæus*!

What! de bug massa? I d rudder not go fer truble dat bug you mus git him for your own self. Hereupon Legrand arose with a grave and stately air and brought me the beetle from a glass case in which it was enclosed. It was a beautiful *scarabæus* and at that time unknown to naturalists—of course a great prize in a scientific point of view. There were two round black spots near one extremity of the back and a long one near the other. The scales were exceedingly hard and glossy with all the appearance of burnished gold. The weight of the insect was very remarkable and taking all things into consideration I could hardly blame Jupiter for his opinion respecting it, but what to make of Legrand's concordance with that opinion, I could not for the life of me tell.

I sent for you, said he in a grandiloquent tone, when I had completed my examination of the beetle.

I sent for you that I might have your counsel and assistance in furthering the views of Fate and of the bug—

My dear Legrand I cried interrupting him, you are certainly unwell and had better use some little precautions. You shall go to bed, and I will remain with you a few days until you get over this. You are feverish and—

Feel my pulse, said he.

I felt it and, to say the truth found not the slightest indication of fever.

But you may be ill and yet have no fever. Allow me this once to prescribe for you. In the first place go to bed. In the next—

You are mistaken, he interposed. I am as well as I can expect to be under the excitement which I suffer. If you really wish me well, you will relieve this excitement.

And how is this to be done?

Very easily. Jupiter and myself are going upon an



expedition into the hills, upon the main land, and in this expedition we shall need the aid of some person in whom we can confide. You are the only one we can trust. Whether we succeed or fail, the excitement which you now perceive in me will be equally allayed.

I am anxious to oblige you in any way. I replied but do you mean to say that this infernal beetle has any connection with your expedition into the hills?

It has.

Then Legrand, I can become a party to no such absurd proceeding.

I am sorry—very sorry—for we shall have to try it by ourselves.

Try it by yourselves! The man is surely mad!—but stay!—how long do you propose to be absent?

Probably all night. We shall start immediately and be back at all events by sunrise.

And will you promise me, upon your honor, that when this freak of yours is over and the bug business (good God!) settled to your satisfaction, you will then return home and follow my advice implicitly as that of your physician?

Yes, I promise, and now let us be off, for we have no time to lose.

With a heavy heart I accompanied my friend. We started about four o'clock—Legrand, Jupiter, the dog, and myself. Jupiter had with him the scythe and spades—the whole of which he insisted upon carrying—more through fear, it seemed to me, of trusting either of the implements within reach of his master, than from any excess of industry or complaisance. His demeanor was dogged in the extreme, and that deuced bug were the sole words which escaped his lips during the journey. For my own part, I had charge of a couple of dark lanterns, while Legrand contented himself with the *scarabæus*, which he carried attached to the end of a bit of whip cord, twirling it to and fro with the air of a conjuror, as he went. When I observed this last plain evidence of my friend's aberration of mind, I could scarcely refrain from tears. I thought it best, however, to humor his fancy at least for the present, or until I could adopt some more energetic measures with a chance of success. In the meantime I endeavored, but all in vain, to sound him in regard to the object of the expedition. Having succeeded in inducing me to accompany him, he seemed unwilling to hold conversation upon any topic of minor importance, and to all my questions vouchsafed no other reply than, 'we shall see!'

We crossed the creek at the head of the island by means of a skiff, and ascending the high grounds on the shore of the main land, proceeded in a north-westerly direction through a tract of country excessively wild and desolate, where no trace of a

human footstep was to be seen. Legrand led the way with decision, pausing only for an instant here and there to consult what appeared to be certain landmarks of his own contrivance upon a former occasion.

In this manner we journeyed for about two hours, and the sun was just setting when we entered a region infinitely more dreary than any yet seen. It was a species of table land, near the summit of an almost inaccessible hill, densely wooded from base to pinnacle, and interspersed with huge crags that appeared to lie loosely upon the soil, and in many cases were prevented from precipitating themselves into the valleys below, merely by the support of the trees against which they reclined. Deep ravines, in various directions, gave an air of still sterner solemnity to the scene.

The natural platform to which we had clambered was thickly overgrown with brambles, through which we soon discovered that it would have been impossible to force our way but for the scythe and Jupiter, by direction of his master, proceeded to clear for us a path to the foot of an enormously tall tulip tree, which stood with some eight or ten oaks upon the level, and far surpassed them all, and all other trees which I had then ever seen, in the beauty of its foliage and form, in the wide spread of its branches, and in the general majesty of its appearance. When we reached this tree, Legrand turned to Jupiter and asked him if he thought he could climb it. The old man seemed a little staggered by the question, and for some moments made no reply. At length he approached the huge trunk, walked slowly around it, and examined it with minute attention. When he had completed his scrutiny, he merely said:

Yes, massa, Jup climb any tree he ebber see in he life.

Then up with you as soon as possible, for it will soon be too dark to see what we are about.

How far mus go up, massa? inquired Jupiter.

Get up the main trunk first, and then I will tell you which way to go—and here—stop! take this beetle with you.

De bug, Massa Will!—de goole bug! cried the negro, drawing back in dismay—what for mus tote de bug way up de tree?—d—n if I do!

If you are afraid, Jup, a great big negro like you, to take hold of a harmless little dead beetle, why you can carry it up by this string—but if you do not take it up with you in some way, I shall be under the necessity of breaking your head with this shovel.

What de matter now, massa? said Jup, evidently shamed into compliance, always want for to raise fuss wid old nigger. Was only funnin anyhow. Me feeied de bug! what I keer for de bug? Here he

took cautiously hold of the extreme end of the sting, and maintaining the insect as far from his person as circumstances would permit prepared to ascend the tree

In youth, the tulip tree or *Liriodendron Tulipiferum* the most magnificent of American forest-trees has a trunk peculiarly smooth and often rises to a great height without lateral branches but in its riper age the bark becomes gnarled and uneven while many short limbs make their appearance on the stem Thus the difficulty of ascension in the present case lay more in semblance than in reality Embracing the huge cylinder, as closely as possible with his arms and knees, seizing with his hands some projections and resting his naked toes upon others Jupiter, after one or two narrow escapes from falling at length wriggled himself into the first great fork, and seemed to consider the whole business as virtually accomplished The risk of the achievement was in fact now over although the climber was some sixty or seventy feet from the ground

Which way mus go now Massa Will? he asked

Keep up the largest branch—the one on this side said Legrand The negro obeyed him promptly, and apparently with but little trouble ascending higher and higher until no glimpse of his squat figure could be obtained through the dense foliage which enveloped it Presently his voice was heard in a sort of halloo

How much fudder is got for go?

How high up are you? asked Legrand

Ebber so fur replied the negro, can see de sky fru de top ob de tree

Never mind the sky but attend to what I say Look down the trunk and count the limbs below you on this side How many limbs have you passed?

One, two tree, four fibe—I done pass fibe big limb massa pon dis side

Then go one limb higher

In a few minutes the voice was heard again, announcing that the seventh limb was attained

Now, Jup, cried Legrand, evidently much excited, I want you to work your way out upon that limb as far as you can If you see any thing strange let me know

By this time what little doubt I might have entertained of my poor friend's insanity was put finally at rest I had no alternative but to conclude him stricken with lunacy, and I became seriously anxious about getting him home While I was pondering upon what was best to be done Jupiter's voice was again heard

Mos' feered for to venture pon dis limb berry far—tis dead limb putty much all de way

Did you say it was a *dead* limb, Jupiter? cried Legrand in a quavering voice

Yes massa, him dead as de door nail—done up for sartain—done departed dis here life

What in the name of heaven shall I do? asked Legrand seemingly in the greatest distress

Do! said I, glad of an opportunity to interpose a word why come home and go to bed Come now!—that's a fine fellow It's getting late and besides you remember your promise

Jupiter, cried he, without heeding me in the least do you hear me?

Yes Massa Will hear you ebber so plain

Try the wood well then with your knife and see if you think it *very* rotten

Him rotten, massa sure nuff replied the negro in a few moments but not so berry rotten as mought be Mought venture out leetle way pon de limb by myself dat's true

By yourself!—what do you mean?

Why I mean de bug Tis berry hebby bug Spose I drop him down fuss and den de limb won't break wid just de weight ob one nigger

You infernal scoundrel! cried Legrand apparently much relieved what do you mean by telling me such nonsense as that? As sure as you drop that beetle I'll break your neck Look here Jupiter, do you hear me?

Yes massa needn't hollo at poor nigger d't style

Well! now listen!—if you will venture out on the limb as far as you think safe and not let go the beetle I'll make you a present of a silver dollar as soon as you get down

I'm gwine Massa Will—deed I is replied the negro very promptly—mos out to the end now

*Out to the end!* here fairly screamed Legrand do you say you are out to the end of that limb?

Soon be to de end massa—o o o oh! Lor gol-a-marcy! what is dis here pon de tree?

Well! cried Legrand, highly delighted what is it?

Why taint noffin but a skull—somebody bin left him head up de tree and de crows done gobble ebery bit ob de meat off

A skull you say!—very well—how is it fastened to the limb?—what holds it on?

Sure nuff, massa mus look Why dis berry curious circumstance pon my word—dares a great big nail in de skull what fastens ob it on to de tree

Well now, Jupiter, do exactly as I tell you—do you hear?

Yes massa

Pay attention, then—find the left eye of the skull

Hum! hoo! dat's good! why dey aint no eye left at all

Curse your stupidity! do you know your right hand from your left?

Yes, I knows dat—know all bout dat—tis my left hand what I chops de wood wid

To be sure! you are left handed and your left eye is on the same side as your left hand. Now, I suppose you can find the left eye of the skull or the place where the left eye has been. Have you found it?

Here was a long pause. At length the negro asked

Is de left eye ob de skull pon de same side as de left hand ob de skull too?—cause de skull aint got not a bit ob a hand at all—nebber mind! I got de left eye now—here de left eye! what mus do wid it?

Let the beetle drop through it as far as the string will reach—but be careful and not let go your hold of the string

All dat done, Massa Will, mighty easy ting for to put the bug fru de hole—look out for him dare below!

During this colloquy no portion of Jupiter's person could be seen but the beetle, which he had suffered to descend, was now visible at the end of the string and glistened like a globe of burnished gold, in the last rays of the setting sun some of which still faintly illumined the eminence upon which we stood. The *scarabæus* hung quite clear of any branches and if allowed to fall would have fallen at our feet. Legrand immediately took the scythe, and cleared with it a circular space three or four yards in diameter just beneath the insect and having accomplished this, ordered Jupiter to let go the string and come down from the tree.

Driving a peg with great nicety into the ground at the precise spot where the beetle fell my friend now produced from his pocket a tape measure. Fastening one end of this at that point of the trunk of the tree which was nearest the peg he unrolled it till it reached the peg and thence further unrolled it in the direction already established by the two points of the tree and the peg for the distance of fifty feet—Jupiter clearing away the brambles with the scythe. At the spot thus attained a second peg was driven and about this as a centre a rude circle, about four feet in diameter, described. Taking now a spade himself and giving one to Jupiter and one to me Legrand begged us to set about digging as quickly as possible.

To speak the truth I had no especial relish for such amusement at any time, and, at that particular moment would most willingly have declined it, for the night was coming on and I felt much fatigued with the exercise already taken but I saw no mode of escape, and was fearful of disturbing my poor

friends equanimity by a refusal. Could I have depended indeed upon Jupiter's aid I would have had no hesitation in attempting to get the lunatic home by force but I was too well assured of the old negro's disposition to hope that he would assist me under any circumstances in a personal contest with his master. I made no doubt that the latter had been infected with some of the innumerable Southern superstitions about money buried and that his phantasy had received confirmation by the finding of the *scarabæus* or, perhaps by Jupiter's obstinacy in maintaining it to be a bug of real gold. A mind disposed to lunacy would readily be led away by such suggestions—especially if chiming in with favorite preconceived ideas—and then I called to mind the poor fellow's speech about the beetle's being the index of his fortune. Upon the whole I was sadly vexed and puzzled, but at length I concluded to make a virtue of necessity—to dig with a good will and thus the sooner to convince the visionary, by ocular demonstration of the fallacy of the opinions he entertained.

The lanterns having been lit we all fell to work with a zeal worthy a more rational cause and as the glare fell upon our persons and implements I could not help thinking how picturesque a group we composed and how strange and suspicious our labors must have appeared to any interloper who by chance, might have stumbled upon our whereabouts.

We dug very steadily for two hours. Little was said and our chief embarrassment lay in the yelpings of the dog who took exceeding interest in our proceedings. He, at length became so obstreperous that we grew fearful of his giving the alarm to some stragglers in the vicinity—or rather this was the apprehension of Legrand—for myself, I should have rejoiced at any interruption which might have enabled me to get the wanderer home. The noise was at length very effectually silenced by Jupiter who getting out of the hole with a dogged air of deliberation tied the brute's mouth up with one of his suspenders and then returned with a grave chuckle to his task.

When the time mentioned had expired we had reached a depth of five feet and yet no signs of any treasure became manifest. A general pause ensued and I began to hope that the farce was at an end. Legrand however although evidently much disconcerted wiped his brow thoughtfully and recommenced. We had excavated the entire circle of four feet diameter and now we slightly enlarged the limit and went to the farther depth of two feet. Still nothing appeared. The gold-seeker whom I sincerely pitied at length clambered from the pit with the bitterest disappointment imprinted upon every feature, and proceeded, slowly and reluc

tantly to put on his coat which he had thrown off at the beginning of his labor. In the meantime I made no remark. Jupiter, at a signal from his master, began to gather up his tools. This done, and the dog having been unmuzzled, we turned in profound silence toward home.

We had taken perhaps a dozen steps in this direction when, with a loud oath, Legrand strode up to Jupiter and seized him by the collar. The astonished negro opened his eyes and mouth to the fullest extent, let fall the spades, and fell upon his knees.

You scoundrel! said Legrand, hissing out the syllables from between his clenched teeth—you infernal black villain!—speak, I tell you!—answer me this instant without prevarication!—which—which is your left eye?

Oh my golly Massa Will! an't dis here my left eye for sartain? roared the terrified Jupiter, placing his hand upon his *right* organ of vision, and holding it there with a desperate pertinacity, as if in immediate dread of his master's attempt at a gouge.

I thought so!—I knew it! huiiah! vociferated Legrand, letting the negro go and executing a series of curvets and caracols much to the astonishment of his valet, who arising from his knees, looked mutely from his master to myself, and then from myself to his master.

Come! we must go back, said the latter, the games not up yet, and he again led the way to the tulip-tree.

Jupiter said he, when we reached its foot, come here! was the skull nailed to the limb with the face outward, or with the face to the limb?

De face was out massa, so dat de crows could get at de eyes good widout any trouble.

Well then, was it this eye or that through which you dropped the beetle?—here Legrand touched each of Jupiter's eyes.

Twas dis eye massa—de left eye—jus as you tell me, and here it was his right eye that the negro indicated.

That will do—we must try it again.

Here my friend, about whose madness I now saw, or fancied that I saw, certain indications of method, removed the peg which marked the spot where the beetle fell, to a spot about three inches to the westward of its former position. Taking now, the tape measure from the nearest point of the trunk to the peg, as before, and continuing the extension in a straight line to the distance of fifty feet, a spot was indicated, removed by several yards from the point at which we had been digging.

Around the new position a circle, somewhat larger than in the former instance, was now described, and we again set to work with the spade. I was dreadfully weary, but, scarcely understanding what

had occasioned the change in my thoughts, I felt no longer any great aversion from the labor imposed. I had become most unaccountably interested—nay, even excited. Perhaps there was something amid all the extravagant demeanor of Legrand—some air of forethought or of deliberation which impressed me. I dug eagerly, and now and then caught myself actually looking with something that very much resembled expectation for the fancied treasure, the vision of which had demented my unfortunate companion. At a period when such vagaries of thought most fully possessed me, and when we had been at work perhaps an hour and a half, we were again interrupted by the violent howlings of the dog. His uneasiness in the first instance had been evidently but the result of playfulness or caprice, but he now assumed a bitter and serious tone. Upon Jupiter's again attempting to muzzle him, he made furious resistance, and leaping into the hole, tore up the mould frantically with his claws. In a few seconds he had uncovered a mass of human bones forming two complete skeletons intermingled with several buttons of metal, and what appeared to be the dust of decayed woollen. One or two strokes of a spade up-turned the blade of a large Spanish knife, and, as we dug farther, three or four loose pieces of gold and silver coin came to light.

At sight of these the joy of Jupiter could scarcely be restrained, but the countenance of his master wore an air of extreme disappointment. He urged us, however, to continue our excursions, and the words were hardly uttered when I stumbled and fell forward, having caught the toe of my boot in a large ring of iron that lay half buried in the loose earth.

We now worked in earnest, and never did I pass ten minutes of more intense excitement. During this interval we had fairly unearthed an oblong chest of wood, which, from its perfect preservation and wonderful hardness, had plainly been subjected to some mineralizing process—perhaps that of the bichloride of mercury. This box was three feet and a half long, three feet broad, and two and a half feet deep. It was firmly secured by bands of wrought iron riveted, and forming a kind of open tiellus work over the whole. On each side of the chest, near the top, were three rings of iron—six in all—by means of which a firm hold could be obtained by six persons. Our utmost united endeavors served only to disturb the coffer very slightly in its bed. We at once saw the impossibility of removing so great a weight. Luckily the sole fastenings of the lid consisted of two sliding bolts. These we drew back—trembling and panting with anxiety. In an instant a treasure of incalculable value lay gleaming before us. As the rays of the lanterns fell within the pit, there flashed upward a glow and a glare from a

confused heap of gold and of jewels that absolutely dazzled our eyes

I shall not pretend to describe the feelings with which I gazed. Amazement was of course predominant. Legrand appeared exhausted with excitement and spoke very few words. Jupiter's countenance wore for some minutes as deadly a pallor as it is possible, in the nature of things for any negro's visage to assume. He seemed stupefied—thunder-stricken. Presently he fell upon his knees in the pit and burying his naked arms up to the elbows in gold let them there remain as if enjoying the luxury of a bath. At length with a deep sigh he exclaimed as if in a soliloquy

And dis all cum ob de goole bug! de putty goole-bug! the poor little goole bug what I boosed in dat sabage kind of style! Aint you shamed ob yourself nigger?—answer me dat!

It became necessary at last that I should arouse both master and valet to the expediency of removing the treasure. It was growing late, and it behooved us to make exertion that we might get every thing housed before daylight. It was difficult to say what should be done and much time was spent in deliberation—so confused were the ideas of all. We finally lightened the box by removing two thirds of its contents when we were enabled with some trouble to raise it from the hole. The articles taken out were deposited among the brambles and the dog left to guard them with strict orders from Jupiter neither, upon any pretence to stir from the spot nor to open his mouth until our return. We then hurriedly made for home with the chest reaching the hut in safety but after excessive toil at one o'clock in the morning. Worn out as we were it was not in human nature to do more immediately. We rested until two and had supper starting for the hills immediately afterward armed with three stout sacks which by good luck were upon the premises. A little before four we arrived at the point divided the remainder of the booty as equally as might be among us and leaving the holes unfilled again set out for the hut at which for the second time, we deposited our golden burthens just as the first faint streaks of the dawn gleamed from over the tree tops in the East.

We were now thoroughly broken down but the intense excitement of the time denied us repose. After an unquiet slumber of some three or four hours duration we arose as if by preconcert to make examination of our treasure.

The chest had been full to the brim and we spent the whole day and the greater part of the next night in a scrutiny of its contents. There had been nothing like order or arrangement. Every thing had been heaped in promiscuously. Having assorted all with care, we found ourselves possessed of even

vaster wealth than we had at first supposed. In com there was rather more than four hundred and fifty thousand dollars—estimating the value of the pieces as accurately as we could, by the tables of the period. There was not a particle of silver. All was gold of antique date and of great variety—French Spanish and German money with a few English guineas and some counters, of which we had never seen specimens before. There were several very large and heavy coins so worn that we could make nothing of their inscriptions. There was no American money. The value of the jewels we found more difficult in estimating. There were diamonds—some of them exceedingly large and fine—a hundred and ten in all and not one of them small. Eighteen rubies of remarkable brilliancy—three hundred and ten emeralds all very beautiful and twenty one sapphires with an opal. These stones had all been broken from their settings and thrown loose in the chest. The settings themselves which we picked out from among the other gold appeared to have been beaten up with hammers as if to prevent identification. Besides all this there was a vast quantity of solid gold ornaments nearly two hundred massive finger- and ear-rings rich chains—thirty of these, if I remember eighty three very large and heavy crucifixes five gold censers of great value a prodigious golden punch bowl ornamented with richly chased vine leaves and Bacchanalian figures with two sword handles exquisitely embossed and many other smaller articles which I cannot recollect. The weight of these valuables exceeded three hundred and fifty pounds avoirdupois, and in this estimate I have not included one hundred and ninety-seven superb gold watches three of the number being worth each five hundred dollars if one. Many of them were very old and as timekeepers valueless the works having suffered more or less from corrosion—but all were richly jewelled and in cases of great worth. We estimated the entire contents of the chest that night, at a million and a half of dollars and upon the subsequent disposal of the trinkets and jewels (a few being retained for our own use), it was found that we had greatly undervalued the treasure.

When at length we had concluded our examination and the intense excitement of the time had, in some measure subsided Legrand who saw that I was dying with impatience for a solution of this most extraordinary riddle, entered into a full detail of all the circumstances connected with it.

You remember said he, the night when I handed you the rough sketch I had made of the *scarabæus*. You recollect also, that I became quite vexed at you for insisting that my drawing resembled a death's head. When you first made this assertion I thought you were jesting but afterward I called

to mind the peculiar spots on the back of the insect and admitted to myself that your remark had some little foundation in fact. Still the sneer at my graphic powers irritated me—for I am considered a good artist—and therefore when you handed me the scrap of parchment I was about to crumple it up and throw it angrily into the fire.

The scrap of paper you mean, said I.

No, it had much of the appearance of paper, and at first I supposed it to be such, but when I came to draw upon it I discovered it at once to be a piece of very thin parchment. It was quite dirty, you remember. Well, as I was in the very act of crumpling it up, my glance fell upon the sketch at which you had been looking, and you may imagine my astonishment when I perceived, in fact, the figure of a death's head just where it seemed to me I had made the drawing of the beetle. For a moment I was too much amazed to think with accuracy. I knew that my design was very different in detail from this—although there was a certain similarity in general outline. Presently I took a candle and seating myself at the other end of the room proceeded to scrutinize the parchment more closely. Upon turning it over, I saw my own sketch upon the reverse just as I had made it. My first idea now was mere surprise at the really remarkable similarity of outline—at the singular coincidence involved in the fact that unknown to me there should have been a skull upon the other side of the parchment immediately beneath my figure of the *scarabæus* and that this skull, not only in outline but in size should so closely resemble my drawing. I say the singularity of this coincidence absolutely stupefied me for a time. This is the usual effect of such coincidences. The mind struggles to establish a connection—a sequence of cause and effect—and being unable to do so suffers a species of temporary paralysis. But when I recovered from this stupor, there dawned upon me gradually a conviction which startled me even far more than the coincidence. I began distinctly positively to remember that there had been *no* drawing upon the parchment when I made my sketch of the *scarabæus*. I became perfectly certain of this for I recollected turning up first one side and then the other, in search of the cleanest spot. Had the skull been there of course I could not have failed to notice it. Here was indeed a mystery which I felt it impossible to explain, but even at that early moment, there seemed to glimmer faintly within the most remote and secret chambers of my intellect a glow-worm like conception of that truth which last night's adventure brought to so magnificent a demonstration. I arose at once and putting the parchment securely away dismissed all further reflection until I should be alone.

When you had gone and when Jupiter was fast asleep, I betook myself to a more methodical investigation of the affair. In the first place I considered the manner in which the parchment had come into my possession. The spot where we discovered the *scarabæus* was on the coast of the main land about a mile eastward of the island and but a short distance above high water mark. Upon my taking hold of it, it gave me a sharp bite which caused me to let it drop. Jupiter with his accustomed caution before seizing the insect which had flown toward him looked about him for a leaf or something of that nature by which to take hold of it. It was at this moment that his eyes and mine also fell upon the scrap of parchment which I then supposed to be paper. It was lying half buried in the sand, a corner sticking up. Near the spot where we found it I observed the remnants of the hull of what appeared to have been a ship's long boat. The wreck seemed to have been there for a very great while for the resemblance to boat timbers could scarcely be traced.

Well, Jupiter picked up the parchment, wrapped the beetle in it and gave it to me. Soon afterward we turned to go home and on the way met Lieutenant G——. I showed him the insect and he begged me to let him take it to the fort. Upon my consenting he thrust it forthwith into his waistcoat pocket without the parchment in which it had been wrapped, and which I had continued to hold in my hand during his inspection. Perhaps he dreaded my changing my mind and thought it best to make sure of the prize at once—you know how enthusiastic he is on all subjects connected with Natural History. At the same time, without being conscious of it I must have deposited the parchment in my own pocket.

You remember that when I went to the table for the purpose of making a sketch of the beetle I found no paper where it was usually kept. I looked in the drawer and found none there. I searched my pockets hoping to find an old letter when my hand fell upon the parchment. I thus detail the precise mode in which it came into my possession for the circumstances impressed me with peculiar force.

No doubt you will think me fanciful—but I had already established a kind of *connection*. I had put together two links of a great chain. There was a boat lying upon the sea coast and not far from the boat was a parchment—not a *paper*—with a skull depicted upon it. You will of course ask where is the connection? I reply that the skull, or death's head is the well known emblem of the pirate. The flag of the death's head is hoisted in all engagements.

I have said that the scrap was parchment and not paper. Parchment is durable—almost imperishable. Matters of little moment are rarely consigned to parchment since for the mere ordinary purposes

of drawing or writing it is not nearly so well adapted as paper. This reflection suggested some meaning—some relevancy—in the death's head. I did not fail to observe also the *form* of the parchment. Although one of its corners had been by some accident destroyed it could be seen that the original form was oblong. It was just such a slip indeed as might have been chosen for a memorandum—for a record of something to be long remembered and carefully preserved.

But, I interposed, you say that the skull was *not* upon the parchment when you made the drawing of the beetle. How then do you trace any connection between the boat and the skull—since this latter according to your own admission must have been designed (God only knows how or by whom) at some period subsequent to your sketching the *scarabæus*?

Ah hereupon turns the whole mystery although the secret at this point I had comparatively little difficulty in solving. My steps were sure and could afford a single result. I reasoned for example, thus. When I drew the *scarabæus* there was no skull apparent upon the parchment. When I had completed the drawing I gave it to you and observed you narrowly until you returned it. You therefore, did not design the skull and no one else was present to do it. Then it was not done by human agency. And nevertheless it was done.

At this stage of my reflections I endeavored to remember and *did* remember with entire distinctness every incident which occurred about the period in question. The weather was chilly (oh rare and happy accident!), and a fire was blazing upon the hearth. I was heated with exercise and sat near the table. You, however, had drawn a chair close to the chimney. Just as I placed the parchment in your hand, and as you were in the act of inspecting it, Wolf, the Newfoundland, entered and leaped upon your shoulders. With your left hand you caressed him and kept him off while your right holding the parchment, was permitted to fall listlessly between your knees and in close proximity to the fire. At one moment I thought the blaze had caught it and was about to caution you but, before I could speak you had withdrawn it and were engaged in its examination. When I considered all these particulars I doubted not for a moment that *heat* had been the agent in bringing to light upon the parchment the skull which I saw designed upon it. You are well aware that chemical preparations exist and have existed time out of mind by means of which it is possible to write upon either paper or vellum, so that the characters shall become visible only when subjected to the action of fire. Zaffre digested in *aqua regia* and diluted with four times its weight of water, is sometimes employed. A green tint results

The regulus of cobalt dissolved in spirit of nitric gives a red. These colors disappear at longer or shorter intervals after the material written upon cools but again become apparent upon the re-application of heat.

I now scrutinized the death's head with care. Its outer edges—the edges of the drawing nearest the edge of the vellum—were far more *distinct* than the others. It was clear that the action of the caloric had been imperfect or unequal. I immediately kindled a fire and subjected every portion of the parchment to a glowing heat. At first, the only effect was the strengthening of the faint lines in the skull but upon persevering in the experiment there became visible at the corner of the slip diagonally opposite to the spot in which the death's head was delineated the figure of what I at first supposed to be a goat. A closer scrutiny however, satisfied me that it was intended for a kid.

Ha! ha! said I to be sure I have no right to laugh at you—a million and a half of money is too serious a matter for mirth—but you are not about to establish a third link in your chain—you will not find any especial connection between your pirates and a goat—pirates you know have nothing to do with goats they appertain to the farming interest.

But I have just said that the figure was *not* that of a goat.

Well a kid then—pretty much the same thing.

Pretty much but not altogether said Legrand.

You may have heard of one *Captain Kidd*. I at once looked upon the figure of the animal as a kind of punning or hieroglyphical signature. I say signature because its position upon the vellum suggested this idea. The death's head at the corner diagonally opposite had in the same manner the air of a stamp or seal. But I was sorely put out by the absence of all else—of the body to my imagined instrument—of the text for my context.

I presume you expected to find a letter between the stamp and the signature.

Something of that kind. The fact is I felt irresistibly impressed with a presentiment of some vast good fortune impending. I can scarcely say why. Perhaps after all it was rather a desire than an actual belief—but do you know that Jupiter's silly words about the bug being of solid gold had a remarkable effect upon my fancy? And then the series of accidents and coincidences—these were so *very* extraordinary. Do you observe how mere an accident it was that these events should have occurred upon the *sole* day of all the year in which it has been, or may be sufficiently cool for fire and that without the fire or without the intervention of the dog at the precise moment in which he appeared. I should never have become aware of the



death's head and so never the possessor of the treasure?

But proceed—I am all impatience

Well you have heard of course the many stories current—the thousand vague rumors afloat about money buried somewhere upon the Atlantic coast by Kidd and his associates. These rumors must have had some foundation in fact. And that the rumors have existed so long and so continuous could have resulted it appeared to me only from the circumstance of the buried treasure still *remaining* entombed. Had Kidd concealed his plunder for a time and afterward reclaimed it the rumors would scarcely have reached us in their present unvarying form. You will observe that the stories told are all about money seekers not about money-finders. Had the pirate recovered his money there the affair would have dropped. It seemed to me that some accident—say the loss of a memorandum indicating its locality—had deprived him of the means of recovering it and that this accident had become known to his followers who otherwise might never have heard that treasure had been concealed at all and who busying themselves in vain because unguided attempts to regain it had given first birth and then universal currency to the reports which are now so common. Have you ever heard of any important treasure being unearthed along the coast?

Never

But that Kidd's accumulations were immense is well known. I took it for granted therefore that the earth still held them and you will scarcely be surprised when I tell you that I felt a hope nearly amounting to certainty that the parchment so strangely found involved a lost record of the place of deposit.

But how did you proceed?

I held the vellum again to the fire, after increasing the heat but nothing appeared. I now thought it possible that the coating of dirt might have something to do with the failure so I carefully rinsed the parchment by pouring warm water over it and having done this I placed it in a tin pan with the skull downward and put the pan upon a furnace of lighted charcoal. In a few minutes the pan having become thoroughly heated I removed the slip and to my inexpressible joy found it spotted in several places with what appeared to be figures arranged in lines. Again I placed it in the pan and suffered it to remain another minute. Upon taking it off, the whole was just as you see it now.

Here Legrand having reheated the parchment submitted it to my inspection. The following characters were rudely traced in a red tint between the death's head and the goat

53‡‡‡305))6\* 4826)4‡)4‡) 806\* 48†8‡(60))85 1‡  
( ‡\*8†83(88)5\*† 46( 88\*96\*? 8)\*‡( 485) 5\*†2 \*  
‡( 4956\*2(5\*—4)8‡8\* 4069285) )6†8)4‡‡ 1(†9  
48081 8 8‡1 48†85 4)485†528806\*81 (†9 48 (88 4  
(†?34 48)4‡ 161 188 ‡?

But said I, returning him the slip I am as much in the dark as ever. Were all the jewels of Golconda awaiting me upon my solution of this enigma I am quite sure that I should be unable to earn them.

And yet said Legrand the solution is by no means so difficult as you might be led to imagine from the first hasty inspection of the characters. These characters as one might readily guess form a cipher—that is to say they convey a meaning but then from what is known of Kidd I could not suppose him capable of constructing any of the more abstruse cryptographs. I made up my mind at once, that this was of a simple species—such however as would appear to the crude intellect of the sailor absolutely insoluble without the key.

And you really solved it?

Readily I have solved others of an abstruseness ten thousand times greater. Circumstances and a certain bias of mind have led me to take interest in such riddles and it may well be doubted whether human ingenuity can construct an enigma of the kind which human ingenuity may not by proper application, resolve. In fact having once established connected and legible characters I scarcely gave a thought to the mere difficulty of developing their import.

In the present case—indeed in all cases of secret writing—the first question regards the *language* of the cipher for the principles of solution so far as especially as the more simple ciphers are concerned depend upon and are varied by the genius of the particular idiom. In general there is no alternative but experiment (directed by probabilities) of every tongue known to him who attempts the solution until the true one be attained. But with the cipher now before us all difficulty was removed by the signature. The pun upon the word Kidd is appreciable in no other language than the English. But for this consideration I should have begun my attempts with the Spanish and French as the tongues in which a secret of this kind would most naturally have been written by a pirate of the Spanish main. As it was I assumed the cryptograph to be English.

You observe there are no divisions between the words. Had there been divisions the task would have been comparatively easy. In such cases I should have commenced with a collation and analysis of the shorter words and had a word of a single letter occurred as is most likely (*a* or *I*, for example)



I should have considered the solution as assured. But there being no division my first step was to ascertain the predominant letters as well as the least frequent. Counting all I constructed a table thus

Of the character 8 there are	33
	26
4	19
†)	16
*	13
5	12
6	11
†1	8
0	6
92	5
3	4
?	3
¶	2
—	1

Now in English the letter which most frequently occurs is *e*. Afterward the succession runs thus *a o i d h n r s t u y c f g l m w b k p q x z*. *E* predominates so remarkably that an individual sentence of any length is rarely seen, in which it is not the prevailing character.

Here then, we have in the very beginning the groundwork for something more than a mere guess. The general use which may be made of the table is obvious—but in this particular cipher we shall only very partially require its aid. As our predominant character is 8 we will commence by assuming it as the *e* of the natural alphabet. To verify the supposition let us observe if the 8 be seen often in couples—for *e* is doubled with great frequency in English—in such words for example, as *meet*, *fleet*, *speed*, *seen*, *been*, *agree*, etc. In the present instance we see it doubled no less than five times although the cryptograph is brief.

Let us assume 8 then as *e*. Now of all words in the language the *is* is most usual let us see therefore, whether there are not repetitions of any three characters in the same order of collocation the last of them being 8. If we discover repetitions of such letters so arranged they will most probably represent the word *the*. Upon inspection we find no less than seven such arrangements the characters being 48. We may therefore assume that represents *t*, 4 represents *h*, and 8 represents *e*—the last being now well confirmed. Thus a great step has been taken.

But having established a single word, we are enabled to establish a vastly important point that is to say several commencements and terminations of other words. Let us refer for example to the last instance but one, in which the combination 48 occurs—not far from the end of the cipher. We

know that the immediately ensuing is the commencement of a word and of the six characters succeeding this the we are cognizant of no less than five. Let us set these characters down thus by the letters we know them to represent leaving a space for the unknown—

t eeth

Here we are enabled at once to discard the *th* as forming no portion of the word commencing with the first *t* since by experiment of the entire alphabet for a letter adapted to the vacancy we perceive that no word can be formed of which this *th* can be a part. We are thus narrowed into

t ee,

and going through the alphabet if necessary as before we arrive at the word *tree* as the sole possible reading. We thus gain another letter *r* represented by ( with the words the *tree* in juxtaposition

Looking beyond these words for a short distance we again see the combination 48 and employ it by way of *termination* to what immediately precedes. We have thus this arrangement

the tree 4(†?34 the

or substituting the natural letters where known it reads thus

the tree thi†?3h the

Now if in place of the unknown characters we leave blank spaces, or substitute dots we read thus

the tree thr h the,

when the word *through* makes itself evident at once. But this discovery gives us three new letters, *o*, *u*, and *g* represented by †, ? and 3.

Looking now narrowly through the cipher for combinations of known characters we find not very far from the beginning this arrangement,

83(88 or eegree,

which plainly, is the conclusion of the word *degree* and gives us another letter *d* represented by †.

Four letters beyond the word *degree* we perceive the combination

46(,88

Translating the known characters and representing the unknown by dots as before we read thus

th rtee,

an arrangement immediately suggestive of the word thirteen and again furnishing us with two new characters *i* and *n* represented by 6 and \*

Referring now to the beginning of the cryptograph we find the combination

53‡‡‡

Translating as before we obtain

good

which assures us that the first letter is A, and that the first two words are A good

It is now time that we arrange our key as far as discovered in a tabular form to avoid confusion. It will stand thus

5	represents	a
‡		d
8		e
3		g
4		h
6		i
*		n
‡		o
(		r
		t
?		u

We have therefore no less than eleven of the most important letters represented and it will be unnecessary to proceed with the details of the solution. I have said enough to convince you that ciphers of this nature are readily soluble and to give you some insight into the *rationale* of their development. But be assured that the specimen before us appertains to the very simplest species of cryptograph. It now only remains to give you the full translation of the characters upon the parchment, as unriddled. Here it is

*A good glass in the bishop's hostel in the devil's seat—forty one degrees and thirteen minutes northeast and by north main branch seventh lmb east side shoot from the left eye of the death's head a bee line from the tree through the shot fifty feet out*

But, said I, the enigma seems still in as bad a condition as ever. How is it possible to extort a meaning from all this jargon about devil's seats, death's heads, and bishop's hostels?

I confess, replied Legrand, that the matter still wears a serious aspect when regarded with a casual glance. My first endeavor was to divide the sentence into the natural division intended by the cryptographist.

You mean to punctuate it?

Something of that kind.

But how was it possible to effect this?

I reflected that it had been a *point* with the

writer to run his words together without division so as to increase the difficulty of solution. Now a not over acute man in pursuing such an object would be nearly certain to overlook the matter. When in the course of his composition he arrived at a break in his subject which would naturally require a pause or a point, he would be exceedingly apt to run his characters at this place more than usually close together. If you will observe the MS. in the present instance you will easily detect five such cases of unusual crowding. Acting upon this hint I made the division thus

*A good glass in the bishop's hostel in the devil's seat—forty one degrees and thirteen minutes—north east and by north—main branch seventh lmb east side—shoot from the left eye of the death's head—a bee line from the tree through the shot fifty feet out*

Even this division, said I, leaves me still in the dark.

It left me also in the dark, replied Legrand, for a few days during which I made diligent inquiry in the neighborhood of Sullivan's Island for any building which went by the name of Bishop's Hotel. For of course I dropped the obsolete word *hostel*. Gaining no information on the subject I was on the point of extending my sphere of search and proceeding in a more systematic manner when one morning it entered into my head quite suddenly that this Bishop's Hostel might have some reference to an old family of the name of Bessop which time out of mind had held possession of an ancient manor house about four miles to the northward of the island. I accordingly went over to the plantation and re-instituted my inquiries among the older negroes of the place. At length one of the most aged of the women said that she had heard of such a place as *Bessop's Castle* and thought that she could guide me to it, but that it was not a castle nor a tavern but a high rock.

I offered to pay her well for her trouble and, after some demur, she consented to accompany me to the spot. We found it without much difficulty when dismissing her I proceeded to examine the place. The castle consisted of an irregular assemblage of cliffs and rocks—one of the latter being quite remarkable for its height as well as for its insulated and artificial appearance. I clambered to its apex and then felt much at a loss as to what should be next done.

While I was busied in reflection my eyes fell upon a narrow ledge in the eastern face of the rock perhaps a yard below the summit upon which I stood. This ledge projected about eighteen inches and was not more than a foot wide, while a niche in the cliff just above it gave it a rude resemblance to

one of the hollow backed chais used by our ancestors I made no doubt that here was the devil's seat alluded to in the MS and now I seemed to grasp the full secret of the riddle

The good glass, I knew, could have reference to nothing but a telescope for the word glass is rarely employed in any other sense by seamen Now here I at once saw, was a telescope to be used and a definite point of view *admitting no variation* from which to use it Nor did I hesitate to believe that the phrases forty one degrees and thirteen minutes, and northeast and by north were intended as directions for the levelling of the glass Greatly excited by these discoveries I hurried home procured a telescope and returned to the rock

I let myself down to the ledge and found that it was impossible to retain a seat upon it except in one particular position This fact confirmed my preconceived idea I proceeded to use the glass Of course, the forty one degrees and thirteen minutes could allude to nothing but elevation above the visible horizon since the horizontal direction was clearly indicated by the words northeast and by north This latter direction I at once established by means of a pocket compass, then, pointing the glass as nearly at an angle of forty-one degrees of elevation as I could do it by guess, I moved it cautiously up or down until my attention was arrested by a circular rift or opening in the foliage of a large tree that overtopped its fellows in the distance In the centre of this rift I perceived a white spot but could not at first distinguish what it was Adjusting the focus of the telescope I again looked, and now made it out to be a human skull

Upon this discovery I was so sanguine as to consider the enigma solved for the phrase main branch, seventh limb east side, could refer only to the position of the skull upon the tree, while shoot from the left eye of the death's-head admitted also of but one interpretation in regard to a search for buried treasure I perceived that the design was to drop a bullet from the left eye of the skull, and that a bee line or in other words, a straight line drawn from the nearest point of the trunk through the shot (or the spot where the bullet fell), and thence extended to a distance of fifty feet, would indicate a definite point—and beneath this point I thought it at least *possible* that a deposit of value lay concealed

All this, I said, is exceedingly clear and, although ingenious, still simple and explicit When you left the Bishop's Hotel what then?

Why having carefully taken the bearings of the tree I turned homeward The instant that I left the devil's-seat however the circular rift vanished nor could I get a glimpse of it afterward turn as I would What seems to me the chief ingenuity in this

whole business, is the fact (for repeated experiment has convinced me it is a fact) that the circular opening in question is visible from no other attainable point of view than that afforded by the narrow ledge upon the face of the rock

In this expedition to the Bishop's Hotel I had been attended by Jupiter who had no doubt observed for some weeks past the abstraction of my demeanor and took especial care not to leave me alone But, on the next day getting up very early, I contrived to give him the slip and went into the hills in search of the tree After much toil I found it When I came home at night my valet proposed to give me a flogging With the rest of the adventure I believe you are as well acquainted as myself

I suppose, said I you missed the spot in the first attempt at digging through Jupiter's stupidity in letting the bug fall through the right instead of through the left eye of the skull

Precisely This mistake made a difference of about two inches and a half in the shot—that is to say in the position of the peg nearest the tree and had the treasure been *beneath* the shot the error would have been of little moment but the shot together with the nearest point of the tree, were merely two points for the establishment of a line of direction of course the error however trivial in the beginning increased as we proceeded with the line and by the time we had gone fifty feet threw us quite off the scent But for my deep seated impressions that treasure was here somewhere actually buried, we might have had all our labor in vain

But your grandiloquence and your conduct in swinging the beetle—how excessively odd! I was sure you were mad And why did you insist upon letting fall the bug, instead of a bullet, from the skull?

Why to be frank I felt somewhat annoyed by your evident suspicions touching my sanity, and so resolved to punish you quietly, in my own way, by a little bit of sober mystification For this reason I swung the beetle, and for this reason I let it fall from the tree An observation of yours about its great weight suggested the latter idea

Yes, I perceive, and now there is only one point which puzzles me What are we to make of the skeletons found in the hole?

That is a question I am no more able to answer than yourself There seems however only one plausible way of accounting for them—and yet it is dreadful to believe in such atrocity as my suggestion would imply It is clear that Kidd—if Kidd indeed secreted this treasure which I doubt not—it is clear that he must have had assistance in the labor But this labor concluded, he may have thought it expedient to remove all participants in his secret Per haps a couple of blows with a mattock were suffi

cient while his coadjutors were busy in the pit perhaps it required a dozen—who shall tell?

### STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 What is the precise nature of the central problem in *The Gold Bug*?
- 2 What evidences can you find of the use of scientific method?
- 3 What special characteristics does the teller of the story have? Do they contrast with those of Legrand?
- 4 What devices does Poe use to set mood and atmosphere? How does he use nature?
- 5 Does Poe comment on any aspects of human nature or on any universal problems?



## The Wall

*Jean-Paul Sartre*

This story has meaning especially in terms of the philosophy which underlies it and which it exemplifies in concentrated fictional form. Sartre's philosophy, existentialism, is a complex and difficult matter which cannot readily be explained within a short compass. Fundamentally it is the belief that there is no existence in the world except in our minds and in the ways we constitute ourselves. Man is himself nothing but becomes by so choosing what he wants to be. Man is the sum total of what he has made himself, and it is therefore the obligation of man through affirmative action to make himself into what he wants to be. Human nature, according to Sartre, does not exist, and the relations among men which seem to indicate a common nature merely indicate at a particular time a common series of independent affirmative choices which may or may not be made again in the future. The process of living is thus, in Sartre's view, a continuous one of constant choosing, and a man is constantly engaged in fashioning himself into what he wishes because of his set of values to be.

In this story the distinction is made between a group of men who know that they are to die and a group of men who do not know this. That is, the men awaiting execution, knowing that their death is inevitable, become in consequence different from their jailers who act and make decisions upon the basis of their being free from immediate death as far as they know. What happens in the story is the growth of awareness on the part of the condemned that because they are to die they have in fact come to different and new conclusions about themselves. All of the things that Pablo once lived by—the desire for happiness, for women, for the Republican

cause for friendship—now mean nothing at all to him because his own condition has changed and has brought about a change in the ways in which he constitutes himself and the world around him. In ordinary thinking we should expect Pablo to die still convinced of the justice of his cause, regretful over the world he must leave sorrowing at the years he will not live, mournful for his family fearful of the unknown. We should expect Pablo to die only because he will be killed by force; in other words, he would appear to be entirely the victim of injustice or of circumstance. Thus we might ordinarily hope that perhaps he will be set free, perhaps a pardon or a rescue will intervene—on the assumption that were such a miraculous thing to take place he would at once regain his former position in society and reassume his former values from which he is now being separated only by the wall of the prison against which he is to be shot. But this is not the case at all; the values which Pablo had, and which we want to consider as having some sort of permanent existence in the class of good things or nice things or right things, disappear when Pablo, as a result of his situation, assumes another set of values more appropriate to the dead or dying. Because his existence is shortly to be ended, he cannot understand how he ever could have felt the way he did about women, friends, or even the cause for which he fought. Because his world has changed, he no longer believes in what he once believed and cannot understand the Belgian doctor who has no relevance to his experience precisely because he is a living man who need not constitute his existence in terms of the supervening death. Even the bodies of the condemned undergo changes, and Juan cannot walk out of the cell. As a matter of fact, the men in effect die before they are shot.

What is important, then, is the postulate that Sartre is making about the nature of values and the desires which are based upon them. They are not, according to Sartre, fixed, permanent, or lasting. Dying for a cause is ridiculous just as living is ridiculous. The whole rignmarole of life is an anguished absurdity in which for a few brief moments man makes an effort to fix and assume permanent values. When his situation changes, however, his assumptions and his constitution of himself change so that we cannot even be sure, as in this story, where life is and death is not. External appearances are false in this respect, and the real wall is that which separates the living from the dead while both are still medically speaking at any rate on earth.

THEY PUSHED us into a big white room and I began to blink because the light hurt my eyes. Then I saw a table and four men behind the table, civilians looking over the papers. They had bunched another group of prisoners in the back and we had to cross the whole room to join them. There were several I knew and some others who must have been foreigners. The two in front of me were blond with

round skulls they looked alike I supposed they were French The smaller one kept hitching up his pants nerves

It lasted about three hours, I was dizzy and my head was empty but the room was well heated and I found that pleasant enough for the past 24 hours we hadn't stopped shivering The guards brought the prisoners up to the table one after the other The four men asked each one his name and occupation Most of the time they didn't go any further—or they would simply ask a question here and there

Did you have anything to do with the sabotage of munitions? Or Where were you the morning of the 9th and what were you doing? They didn't listen to the answers or at least didn't seem to They were quiet for a moment and then looking straight in front of them began to write They asked Tom if it were true he was in the International Brigade Tom couldn't tell them otherwise because of the papers they found in his coat They didn't ask Juan anything but they wrote for a long time after he told them his name

My brother Jose is the anarchist Juan said you know he isn't here any more I don't belong to any party I never had anything to do with politics

They didn't answer Juan went on I haven't done anything I don't want to pay for somebody else

His lips trembled A guard shut him up and took him away It was my turn

Your name is Pablo Ibbieta?

Yes

The man looked at the papers and asked me Where's Ramon Gris?

I don't know

You hid him in your house from the 6th to the 19th

No

They wrote for a minute and then the guards took me out In the corridor Tom and Juan were waiting between two guards We started walking Tom asked one of the guards So?

So what? the guard said

Was that the cross-examination or the sentence?

Sentence, the guard said

What are they going to do with us?

The guard answered dryly Sentence will be read in your cell

As a matter of fact, our cell was one of the hospital cellars It was terrifically cold there because of the drafts We shivered all night and it wasn't much better during the day I had spent the previous five days in a cell in a monastery a sort of hole in the wall that must have dated from the middle ages since there were a lot of prisoners and not much room they locked us up anywhere I didn't miss my cell I hadn't suffered too much from the cold but

I was alone after a long time it gets irritating In the cellar I had company Juan hardly ever spoke he was afraid and he was too young to have any thing to say But Tom was a good talker and he knew Spanish well

There was a bench in the cellar and four mats When they took us back we sat and waited in silence After a long moment, Tom said, Were screwed

I think so too, I said, but I don't think they'll do anything to the kid

They don't have a thing against him said Tom He's the brother of a militiaman and that's all

I looked at Juan he didn't seem to hear Tom went on You know what they do in Saragossa? They lay the men down on the road and run over them with trucks A Moroccan deserter told us that They said it was to save ammunition

It doesn't save gas I said

I was annoyed at Tom he shouldn't have said that

Then there's officers walking along the road he went on supervising it all They stick their hands in their pockets and smoke cigarettes You think they finish off the guys? Hell no They let them scream Sometimes for an hour The Moroccan said he damned near puked the first time

I don't believe they'll do that here I said Unless they're really short on ammunition

Day was coming in through four airholes and a round opening they had made in the ceiling on the left and you could see the sky through it Through this hole usually closed by a trap they unloaded coal into the cellar Just below the hole there was a big pile of coal dust it had been used to heat the hospital but since the beginning of the war the patients were evacuated and the coal stayed there, unused sometimes it even got rained on because they had forgotten to close the trap

Tom began to shiver Good Jesus Christ I'm cold he said Here it goes again

He got up and began to do exercises At each movement his shirt opened on his chest white and hairy He lay on his back raised his legs in the air and bicycled I saw his great rump trembling Tom was husky but he had too much fat I thought how rifle bullets or the sharp points of bayonets would soon be sunk into this mass of tender flesh as in a lump of butter It wouldn't have made me feel like that if he'd been thin

I wasn't exactly cold, but I couldn't feel my arms and shoulders any more Sometimes I had the impression I was missing something and began to look around for my coat and then suddenly remembered they hadn't given me a coat It was rather uncomfortable They took our clothes and gave them to the soldiers leaving us only our shirts—and those

canvas pants that hospital patients wear in the middle of summer. After a while Tom got up and sat next to me breathing heavily.

Warmer?

Good Christ, no. But I'm out of wind.

Around eight o'clock in the evening a major came in with two *falangistas*. He had a sheet of paper in his hand. He asked the guard, "What are the names of those three?"

Stenbock, Ibbieta and Mirbal, the guard said.

The major put on his eyeglasses and scanned the list. Stenbock. Stenbock. Oh, yes. You are sentenced to death. You will be shot tomorrow morning. He went on looking. The other two as well.

That's not possible, Juan said. Not me.

The major looked at him amazed. "What's your name?"

Juan Mirbal, he said.

Well, your name is there, said the major. You're sentenced.

I didn't do anything, Juan said.

The major shrugged his shoulders and turned to Tom and me.

You're Basque?

Nobody is Basque.

He looked annoyed. They told me there were three Basques. I'm not going to waste my time running after them. Then naturally you don't want a priest?

We didn't even answer.

He said, "A Belgian doctor is coming shortly. He is authorized to spend the night with you. He made a military salute and left."

What did I tell you, Tom said. We get it.

Yes, I said. It's a rotten deal for the kid.

I said that to be decent but I didn't like the kid. His face was too thin and fear and suffering had disfigured it, twisting all his features. Three days before he was a smart sort of kid, not too bad, but now he looked like an old fairy and I thought how he'd never be young again, even if they were to let him go. It wouldn't have been too hard to have a little pity for him but pity disgusts me, or rather it horrifies me. He hadn't said anything more but he had turned grey, his face and hands were both grey. He sat down again and looked at the ground with round eyes. Tom was good-hearted; he wanted to take his aim but the kid tore himself away violently and made a face.

Let him alone, I said in a low voice, you can see he's going to blubber.

Tom obeyed regretfully. He would have liked to comfort the kid; it would have passed his time and he wouldn't have been tempted to think about himself. But it annoyed me. I'd never thought about death because I never had any reason to, but now

the reason was here and there was nothing to do but think about it.

Tom began to talk. So you think you've knocked guys off, do you? he asked me. I didn't answer. He began explaining to me that he had knocked off six since the beginning of August; he didn't realize the situation and I could tell he didn't want to realize it. I hadn't quite realized it myself, I wondered if it hurt much. I thought of bullets. I imagined their burning hail through my body. All that was beside the real question but I was calm. We had all night to understand. After a while Tom stopped talking and I watched him out of the corner of my eye. I saw he too had turned grey and he looked rotten. I told myself, Now it starts. It was almost dark, a dim glow filtered through the airholes and the pile of coal and made a big stain beneath the spot of sky. I could already see a star through the hole in the ceiling; the night would be pure and icy.

The door opened and two guards came in followed by a blond man in a tan uniform. He saluted us. I am the doctor, he said. I have authorization to help you in these trying hours.

He had an agreeable and distinguished voice. I said, "What do you want here?"

I am at your disposal. I shall do all I can to make your last moments less difficult.

What did you come here for? There are others the hospital's full of them.

I was sent here, he answered with a vague look. Ah! Would you like to smoke? he added hurriedly. I have cigarettes and even cigars.

He offered us English cigarettes and *puros* but we refused. I looked him in the eyes and he seemed irritated. I said to him, "You aren't here on an errand of mercy. Besides, I know you. I saw you with the fascists in the barnacks yard the day I was arrested."

I was going to continue but something surprising suddenly happened to me, the presence of this doctor no longer interested me. Generally when I'm on somebody I don't let go. But the desire to talk left me completely. I shrugged and turned my eyes away. A little later I raised my head; he was watching me curiously. The guards were sitting on a mat. Pedro, the tall thin one, was twiddling his thumbs, the other shook his head from time to time to keep from falling asleep.

Do you want a light? Pedro suddenly asked the doctor. The other nodded. Yes, I think he was about as smart as a log but he surely wasn't bad. Looking in his cold blue eyes it seemed to me that his only sin was lack of imagination. Pedro went out and came back with an oil lamp which he set on the corner of the bench. It gave a bad light but it was better than nothing they had left us in the dark the night before. For a long time I watched the circle of light the lamp made on the ceiling. I was

fascinated Then suddenly I woke up the circle of light disappeared and I felt myself crushed under an enormous weight It was not the thought of death or fear, it was nameless My cheeks burned and my head ached

I shook myself and looked at my two friends Tom had hidden his face in his hands I could only see the fat white nape of his neck Little Juan was the worst his mouth was open and his nostrils trembled The doctor went to him and put his hand on his shoulder to comfort him but his eyes stayed cold Then I saw the Belgian's hand drop stealthily along Juan's arm down to the wrist Juan paid no attention The Belgian took his wrist between three fingers distractedly at the same time drawing back a little and turning his back to me But I leaned backward and saw him take a watch from his pocket and look at it for a moment never letting go of the wrist After a minute he let the hand fall inert and went and leaned his back against the wall then as if he suddenly remembered something very important which had to be jotted down on the spot he took a notebook from his pocket and wrote a few lines

Bastard I thought angrily let him come and take my pulse I'll shove my fist in his rotten face

He didn't come but I felt him watching me I raised my head and returned his look Impersonally he said to me Doesn't it seem cold to you here? He looked cold, he was blue

I'm not cold I told him

He never took his hard eyes off me Suddenly I understood and my hands went to my face I was drenched in sweat In this cellar in the midst of winter in the midst of drafts I was sweating I ran my hands through my hair gummed together with perspiration at the same time I saw my shirt was damp and sticking to my skin I had been dripping for an hour and hadn't felt it But that swine of a Belgian hadn't missed a thing he had seen the drops rolling down my cheeks and thought this is the manifestation of an almost pathological state of terror and he had felt normal and proud of being alive because he was cold I wanted to stand up and smash his face but no sooner had I made the slightest gesture than my rage and shame were wiped out I fell back on the bench with indifference

I satisfied myself by rubbing my neck with my handkerchief because now I felt the sweat dropping from my hair onto my neck and it was unpleasant I soon gave up rubbing, it was useless my handkerchief was already soaked and I was still sweating My buttocks were sweating too and my damp trousers were glued to the bench

Suddenly Juan spoke You're a doctor?

Yes, the Belgian said

Does it hurt very long?

Huh? When ? Oh no, the Belgian said

paternally Not at all It's over quickly He acted as though he were calming a cash customer

But I they told me sometimes they have to fire twice

Sometimes the Belgian said nodding It may happen that the first volley reaches no vital organs

Then they have to reload their rifles and aim all over again? He thought for a moment and then added hoarsely That takes time!

He had a terrible fear of suffering it was all he thought about it was his age I never thought much about it and it wasn't fear of suffering that made me sweat

I got up and walked to the pile of coal dust Tom jumped up and threw me a hateful look I had annoyed him because my shoes squeaked I wondered if my face looked as frightened as his I saw he was sweating too The sky was superb no light filtered into the dark corner and I had only to raise my head to see the Big Dipper But it wasn't like it had been the night before I could see a great piece of sky from my monastery cell and each hour of the day brought me a different memory Morning when the sky was a hard light blue I thought of beaches on the Atlantic at noon I saw the sun and I remembered a bar in Seville where I drank *manzanilla* and ate olives and anchovies afternoons I was in the shade and I thought of the deep shadow which spreads over half a bull ring leaving the other half shimmering in sunlight it was really hard to see the whole world reflected in the sky like that But now I could watch the sky as much as I pleased it no longer evoked anything in me I liked that better I came back and sat near Tom A long moment passed

Tom began speaking in a low voice He had to talk without that he wouldn't have been able to recognize himself in his own mind I thought he was talking to me but he wasn't looking at me He was undoubtedly afraid to see me as I was, grey and sweating we were alike and worse than mirrors of each other He watched the Belgian the living

Do you understand? he said I don't understand

I began to speak in a low voice too I watched the Belgian Why? What's the matter?

Something is going to happen to us that I can't understand

There was a strange smell about Tom It seemed to me I was more sensitive than usual to odors I grinned You'll understand in a while

It isn't clear, he said obstinately I want to be brave but first I have to know Listen they're going to take us into the courtyard Good They're going to stand up in front of us How many?

I don't know Five or eight Not more

All right There'll be eight Someone'll holler



aim! and I'll see eight rifles looking at me. I'll think how I'd like to get inside the wall, I'll push against it with my back with every ounce of strength I have but the wall will stay like in a nightmare. I can imagine all that. If you only knew how well I can imagine it.

All right all right! I said, I can imagine it too.

It must hurt like hell. You know, they aim at the eyes and the mouth to disfigure you, he added mechanically. I can feel the wounds already. I've had pains in my head and in my neck for the past hour. Not real pains. Worse. This is what I'm going to feel tomorrow morning. And then what?

I well understood what he meant but I didn't want to act as if I did. I had pains too, pains in my body like a crowd of tiny scars. I couldn't get used to it. But I was like him. I attached no importance to it. After I said 'you'll be pushing up daisies.'

He began to talk to himself. He never stopped watching the Belgian. The Belgian didn't seem to be listening. I knew what he had come to do. He wasn't interested in what we thought. He came to watch our bodies. Bodies dying in agony while yet alive.

It's like a nightmare. Tom was saying. You want to think something, you always have the impression that it's all right that you're going to understand and then it slips. It escapes you and fades away. I tell myself there will be nothing afterwards. But I don't understand what it means. Sometimes I almost can and then it fades away and I start thinking about the pains again, bullets, explosions. I'm a materialist. I swear it to you. I'm not going crazy. But something's the matter. I see my corpse. That's not hard but *I'm* the one who sees it with *my* eyes. I've got to think think that I won't see anything any more and the world will go on for the others. We aren't made to think that. Pablo. Believe me. I've already stayed up a whole night waiting for something. But this isn't the same. This will creep up behind us, Pablo and we won't be able to prepare for it.

Shut up. I said. Do you want me to call a priest?

He didn't answer. I had already noticed he had the tendency to act like a prophet and call me Pablo, speaking in a toneless voice. I didn't like that but it seems all the Irish are that way. I had the vague impression he smelled of urine. Fundamentally, I hadn't much sympathy for Tom and I didn't see why, under the pretext of dying together. I should have any more. It would have been different with some others. With Ramon Gius for example. But I felt alone between Tom and Juan. I liked that better anyhow. With Ramon I might have been more deeply moved. But I was terribly hard just then and I wanted to stay hard.

He kept on chewing his words with something like distraction. He certainly talked to keep himself from thinking. He smelled of urine like an old prostate case. Naturally, I agreed with him. I could have said everything he said. It isn't *natural* to die. And since I was going to die nothing seemed natural to me not this pile of coal dust or the bench or Pedro's ugly face. Only it didn't please me to think the same things as Tom. And I knew that all through the night every five minutes we would keep on thinking things at the same time. I looked at him sideways and for the first time he seemed strange to me. He wore death on his face. My pride was wounded for the past 24 hours I had lived next to Tom. I had listened to him. I had spoken to him and I knew we had nothing in common. And now we looked as much alike as twin brothers simply because we were going to die together. Tom took my hand without looking at me.

Pablo. I wonder. I wonder if it's really true that everything ends.

I took my hand away and said. Look between your feet. You pig.

There was a big puddle between his feet and drops fell from his pants leg.

What is it he asked, frightened.

You're pissing in your pants. I told him.

It isn't true, he said furiously. I'm not pissing. I don't feel anything.

The Belgian approached us. He asked with false solicitude. Do you feel ill?

Tom did not answer. The Belgian looked at the puddle and said nothing.

I don't know what it is. Tom said ferociously. But I'm not afraid. I swear I'm not afraid.

The Belgian did not answer. Tom got up and went to piss in a corner. He came back buttoning his fly and sat down without a word. The Belgian was taking notes.

All three of us watched him because he was alive. He had the motions of a living human being, the cares of a living human being, he shivered in the cellar the way the living are supposed to shiver. He had an obedient well-fed body. The rest of us hardly felt ours—not in the same way anyhow. I wanted to feel my pants between my legs but I didn't dare. I watched the Belgian, balancing on his legs. Master of his muscles. Someone who could think about tomorrow. There we were, three bloodless shadows. We watched him and we sucked his life like vampires.

Finally he went over to little Juan. Did he want to feel his neck for some professional motive or was he obeying an impulse of charity? If he was acting by charity it was the only time during the whole night.

He caressed Juan's head and neck. The kid let

himself be handled his eyes never leaving him then suddenly he seized the hand and looked at it strangely He held the Belgian's hand between his own two hands and there was nothing pleasant about them two grey pincers gripping this fat and reddish hand I suspected what was going to happen and Tom must have suspected it too but the Belgian didn't see a thing he smiled paternally After a moment the kid brought the fat red hand to his mouth and tried to bite it The Belgian pulled away quickly and stumbled back against the wall For a second he looked at us with horror he must have suddenly understood that we were not men like him I began to laugh and one of the guards jumped up The other was asleep his wide open eyes were blank

I felt relaxed and over excited at the same time I didn't want to think any more about what would happen at dawn at death It made no sense I only found words or emptiness But as soon as I tried to think of anything else I saw rifle barrels pointing at me Perhaps I lived through my execution twenty times once I even thought it was for good I must have slept a minute They were dragging me to the wall and I was struggling I was asking for mercy I woke with a start and looked at the Belgian I was afraid I might have cried out in my sleep But he was stroking his moustache he hadn't noticed anything If I had wanted to I think I could have slept a while I had been awake for 48 hours I was at the end of my rope But I didn't want to lose two hours of life they would come to wake me up at dawn I would follow them stupefied with sleep and I would have croaked without so much as an Oof! I didn't want that I didn't want to die like an animal, I wanted to understand Then I was afraid of having nightmares I got up walked back and forth, and to change my ideas I began to think about my past life A crowd of memories came back to me pell mell There were good and bad ones—or at least I called them that *before* There were faces and incidents I saw the face of a little *novi llero* who was gored in Valencia during the *Feria* the face of one of my uncles the face of Ramon Guis I remembered my whole life how I was out of work for three months in 1926, how I almost starved to death I remembered a night I spent on a bench in Girona I hadn't eaten for three days I was angry I didn't want to die That made me smile How madly I ran after happiness after women after liberty Why? I wanted to free Spain I admired Pi y Margall I joined the anarchist movement I spoke in public meetings I took everything as seriously as if I were immortal

At that moment I felt that I had my whole life in front of me and I thought it's a damned lie It was worth nothing because it was finished I wondered how I'd been able to walk to laugh with the

girls I wouldn't have moved so much as my little finger if I had only imagined I would die like this My life was in front of me shut closed like a bag and yet everything inside of it was unfinished For an instant I tried to judge it I wanted to tell myself this is a beautiful life But I couldn't pass judgment on it it was only a sketch I had spent my time counterfeiting eternity I had understood nothing I missed nothing there were so many things I could have missed the taste of *manzanilla* or the baths I took in summer in a little creek near Cadiz, but death had disenchanting everything

The Belgian suddenly had a bright idea My friends he told us I will undertake—if the military administration will allow it—to send a message for you a souvenir to those who love you

Tom mumbled I don't have anybody

I said nothing Tom waited an instant then looked at me with curiosity You don't have anything to say to Concha?

No

I hated this tender complicity it was my own fault I talked about Concha the night before I should have controlled myself I was with her for a year Last night I would have given an arm to see her again for five minutes That was why I talked about her, it was stronger than I was Now I had no more desire to see her I had nothing more to say to her I would not even have wanted to hold her in my arms my body filled me with horror because it was grey and sweating—and I wasn't sure that her body didn't fill me with horror Concha would cry when she found out I was dead she would have no taste for life for months afterward But I was still the one who was going to die I thought of her soft beautiful eyes When she looked at me something passed from her to me But I knew it was over if she looked at me *now* the look would stay in her eyes it wouldn't reach me I was alone

Tom was alone too but not in the same way Sitting cross legged he had begun to stare at the bench with a sort of smile he looked amazed He put out his hand and touched the wood cautiously as if he were afraid of breaking something then drew back his hand quickly and shuddered If I had been Tom I wouldn't have amused myself by touching the bench this was some more Irish nonsense, but I too found that objects had a funny look they were more obliterated, less dense than usual It was enough for me to look at the bench the lamp the pile of coal dust to feel that I was going to die Naturally I couldn't think clearly about my death but I saw it everywhere on things in the way things fell back and kept their distance discreetly as people who speak quietly at the bedside of a dying man It was *his* death which Tom just touched on the bench

In the state I was in if someone had come and told me I could go home quietly that they would leave me my life whole it would have left me cold several hours or several years of waiting is all the same when you have lost the illusion of being eternal I clung to nothing in a way I was calm But it was a horrible calm—because of my body my body I saw with its eyes I heard with its ears, but it was no longer me, it sweated and trembled by itself and I didn't recognize it any more I had to touch it and look at it to find out what was happening as if it were the body of someone else At times I could still feel it I felt sinkings and fallings as when you're in a plane taking a nosedive or I felt my heart beating But that didn't reassure me Everything that came from my body was all cockeyed Most of the time it was quiet and I felt no more than a sort of weight a filthy presence against me I had the impression of being tied to an enormous vermin Once I felt my pants and I felt they were damp I didn't know whether it was sweat or urine but I went to piss on the coal pile as a precaution

The Belgian took out his watch looked at it He said It is three thirty

Bastard! He must have done it on purpose Tom jumped we hadn't noticed time was running out night surrounded us like a shapeless, somber mass, I couldn't even remember that it had begun

Little Juan began to cry He wrung his hands pleaded I don't want to die I don't want to die

He ran across the whole cellar waving his arms in the air then fell sobbing on one of the mats Tom watched him with mournful eyes without the slightest desire to console him Because it wasn't worth the trouble the kid made more noise than we did but he was less touched he was like a sick man who defends himself against his illness by fever It's much more serious when there isn't any fever

He wept I could clearly see he was pitying himself he wasn't thinking about death For one second, one single second I wanted to weep myself to weep with pity for myself But the opposite happened I glanced at the kid I saw his thin sobbing shoulders and I felt inhuman I could pity neither the others nor myself I said to myself I want to die cleanly

Tom had gotten up he placed himself just under the round opening and began to watch for daylight I was determined to die cleanly and I only thought of that But ever since the doctor told us the time, I felt time flying flowing away drop by drop

It was still dark when I heard Tom's voice Do you hear them?

Men were marching in the courtyard

Yes

What the hell are they doing? They can't shoot in the dark

After a while we heard no more I said to Tom It's day

Pedro got up yawning and came to blow out the lamp He said to his buddy Cold as hell

The cellar was all grey We heard shots in the distance

It's starting I told Tom They must do it in the court in the rear

Tom asked the doctor for a cigarette I didn't want one I didn't want cigarettes or alcohol From that moment on they didn't stop firing

Do you realize what's happening Tom said

He wanted to add something but kept quiet watching the door The door opened and a lieutenant came in with four soldiers Tom dropped his cigarette

Steinbock?

Tom didn't answer Pedro pointed him out

Juan Mubal?

On the mat

Get up the lieutenant said

Juan did not move Two soldiers took him under the arms and set him on his feet But he fell as soon as they released him

The soldiers hesitated

He's not the first sick one said the lieutenant You two carry him they'll fix it up down there

He turned to Tom Let's go

Tom went out between two soldiers Two others followed, carrying the kid by the armpits He hadn't fainted his eyes were wide open and tears ran down his cheeks When I wanted to go out the lieutenant stopped me

You Ibbieta?

Yes

You wait here they'll come for you later

They left The Belgian and the two Jews left too I was alone I did not understand what was happening to me but I would have liked it better if they had gotten it over with right away I heard shots at almost regular intervals I shook with each one of them I wanted to scream and tear out my hair But I gritted my teeth and pushed my hands in my pockets because I wanted to stay clean

After an hour they came to get me and led me to the first floor, to a small room that smelt of cigars and where the heat was stifling There were two officers sitting smoking in the armchairs, papers on their knees

You're Ibbieta?

Yes

Where is Ramon Gris?

I don't know

The one questioning me was short and fat His eyes were hard behind his glasses He said to me Come here

I went to him. He got up and took my arms, staring at me with a look that should have pushed me into the earth. At the same time he pinched my biceps with all his might. It wasn't to hurt me; it was only a game: he wanted to dominate me. He also thought he had to blow his stinking breath square in my face. We stayed for a moment like that, and I almost felt like laughing. It takes a lot to intimidate a man who is going to die; it didn't work. He pushed me back violently and sat down again. He said: "It's his life against yours. You can have yours if you tell us where he is."

These men dolled up with their riding crops and boots were still going to die. A little later than I, but not too much. They busied themselves looking for names in their crumpled papers; they ran after other men to imprison or suppress them; they had opinions on the future of Spain and on other subjects. Their little activities seemed shocking and burlesqued to me. I couldn't put myself in their place; I thought they were insane. The little man was still looking at me, whipping his boots with the riding crop. All his gestures were calculated to give him the look of a live and ferocious beast.

So? You understand?

I don't know where Gris is, I answered. I thought he was in Madrid.

The other officer raised his pale hand indolently. This indolence was also calculated. I saw through all their little schemes and I was stupefied to find there were men who amused themselves that way.

You have a quarter of an hour to think it over, he said slowly. Take him to the laundry; bring him back in fifteen minutes. If he still refuses, he will be executed on the spot.

They knew what they were doing. I had passed the night in waiting; then they had made me wait an hour in the cellar while they shot Tom and Juan; and now they were locking me up in the laundry; they must have prepared their game the night before. They told themselves that nerves eventually wear out and they hoped to get me that way.

They were badly mistaken. In the laundry I sat on a stool because I felt very weak and I began to think. But not about their proposition. Of course I knew where Gris was; he was hiding with his cousins four kilometers from the city. I also knew that I would not reveal his hiding place unless they tortured me (but they didn't seem to be thinking about that). All that was perfectly regulated, definite and in no way interested me. Only I would have liked to understand the reasons for my conduct. I would rather die than give up Gris. Why? I didn't like Ramon Gris any more. My friendship for him had died a little while before dawn at the same time as my love for Concha; at the same time as my desire

to live. Undoubtedly I thought highly of him; he was tough. But it was not for this reason that I consented to die in his place; his life had no more value than mine; no life had value. They were going to slap a man up against a wall and shoot at him till he died, whether it was I or Gris or somebody else; made no difference. I knew he was more useful than I to the cause of Spain, but I thought to hell with Spain and anarchy; nothing was important. Yet I was there; I could save my skin and give up Gris and I refused to do it. I found that somehow comic: it was obstinacy, I thought. I must be stubborn! And a droll sort of gaiety spread over me.

They came for me and brought me back to the two officers. A rat ran out from under my feet and that amused me. I turned to one of the *falangistas* and said: "Did you see the rat?"

He didn't answer. He was very sober; he took himself seriously. I wanted to laugh but I held myself back because I was afraid that once I got started I wouldn't be able to stop. The *falangista* had a moustache. I said to him again, "You ought to shave off your moustache, idiot." I thought it funny that he would let the hairs of his living being invade his face. He kicked me without great conviction and I kept quiet.

Well, said the fat officer, have you thought about it?

I looked at them with curiosity as insects of a very rare species. I told them: "I know where he is. He is hidden in the cemetery. In a vault or in the gravediggers' shack."

It was a farce. I wanted to see them stand up, buckle their belts and give orders busily.

They jumped to their feet. "Let's go. Moles go get fifteen men from Lieutenant Lopez. You, the fat man, said: 'I'll let you off if you're telling the truth,' but it'll cost you plenty if you're making monkeys out of us."

They left in a great clatter and I waited peacefully under the guard of *falangistas*. From time to time I smiled, thinking about the spectacle they would make. I felt stunned and malicious. I imagined them lifting up tombstones, opening the doors of the vaults one by one. I represented this situation to myself as if I had been someone else: this prisoner obstinately playing the hero, these grim Falangists with their moustaches and their men in uniform running among the graves; it was irresistibly funny. After half an hour the little fat man came back alone. I thought he had come to give the orders to execute me. The others must have stayed in the cemetery.

The officer looked at me. He didn't look at all sheepish. "Take him into the big courtyard with the

others he said After the military operations a regular court will decide what happens to him

Then they're not not going to shoot me?

Not now anyway What happens afterwards is none of my business

I still didn't understand I asked But why?

He shrugged his shoulders without answering and the soldiers took me away In the big courtyard there were about a hundred prisoners women children and a few old men I began walking around the central grass plot I was stupefied At noon they let us eat in the mess hall Two or three people questioned me I must have known them, but I didn't answer I didn't even know where I was

Around evening they pushed about ten new prisoners into the court I recognized Garcia the baker He said What damned luck you have! I didn't think I'd see you alive

They sentenced me to death I said and then they changed their minds I don't know why

They arrested me at two o'clock Garcia said

Why? Garcia had nothing to do with politics

I don't know he said They arrest everybody who doesn't think the way they do He lowered his voice They got Gris

I began to tremble When?

This morning He messed it up He left his cousins on Tuesday because they had an argument There were plenty of people to hide him but he didn't want to owe anything to anybody He said I'd go and hide in Ibbieta's place but they got him so I'll go hide in the cemetery

In the cemetery?

Yes What a fool Of course they went by there this morning that was sure to happen They found him in the gravedigger's shack He shot at them and they got him

In the cemetery!

Everything began to spin and I found myself sitting on the ground I laughed so hard I cried

## STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 How does Pablo differ from the other condemned?
- 2 Why does Pablo refuse to betray Gris? Is it really stubbornness?
- 3 Why if saving Gris means so much to Pablo does he laugh when it develops that he has really betrayed him?
- 4 What occupies Tom's mind most? Juan's?
- 5 Why does Pablo want to die well?
- 6 How do you account for Pablo's indifference to Gris and to Juan?



# The Home of a Stranger

*Hollis Alpert*

Henry James inquires with studious seriousness into the inner motivations and thoughts of his characters Sartre takes us into the minds of his protagonists in order to demonstrate the nature of such intangibles as sets of values Maugham contents himself with the narration of events Poe is concerned only with objective procedures with which human beings have a necessary connection but little more The next story in this section is one which represents a very special very new and very significant concept of the function and nature of form that which can perhaps best be described as the story of oblique illumination

Alpert is primarily concerned with casting light upon a state of mind a very subtle and difficult state of mind which he does not choose to analyze or discuss but merely to sharpen He does this by narrating a small episode which in itself has no meaning and little suspense of plot interest But he sees in this episode in microcosm a suggestion of a state of mind which is important not only for itself but as an example of attitudes in the modern crisis

The two men in the story come face to face with one of the most serious moral problems of the current world the difference between mass and national behavior on the one hand and individuals on the other Two contradictory attitudes can be taken at the same time and what the two soldiers do is consistently inconsistent just as their hostess is at once both enemy and friend Thus the men are led to a certain series of actions which in the reasonable context of a normally consistent world would make no sense at all but which have a rationale in a disordered world They are led to destroy the apartment because the owner is a Nazi but they are also led to preserve the apartment by their knowledge that it is not always just to blame an individual for the crimes of a nation The problem becomes acute in this relatively simple and normal set of circumstances because it represents the carrying over into the normal world of dichotomous attitudes which are not called into focus in actual battle where there is no hesitation in killing an individual enemy soldier without regard to who he is or to his degree of enmity

Thus Alpert's technique is to use a small incident and to allow it to speak for itself He does not directly comment upon the material which he allows the reader to accept as he may please But he has chosen with a sure insight an incident which is more than just an incident an incident which contains within it an entire point of view This is the form which many modern American stories take and it is a form which is potentially very powerful in its ability to speak to the reader It is also

a form which is not easily understood by many because it seems to end nowhere and to subordinate plot to other considerations. But if we look back upon some of the characteristics of the short story and on some of the purposes and functions of writing we can see that plot alone is not all. Literature can and should speak of human problems to human beings and do more than simply entertain. Alpert's story can tell us much about a moral problem which we are faced with today more than ever before and can show us how important it is to keep clear the values we have.

I HAVE not seen the Colonel since shortly after the cessation of the war in Europe. He went home first his riding crop under his arm as he stepped into a jeep to be driven to the airfield at Munich. He was to have a stop at Paris and then make the flight across the ocean. See you in the States, Mac, he said to me, but I have not seen him. And now I find myself wondering if he can have forgotten me—not because we were such particularly good friends but because of an incident that happened on a day in April 1945 when the end of our war was still a month away.

The question I ask myself often is: Has the Colonel truly been able to slip casually into some corner of his mind the occurrence of that day? I have not been able to forget it, to accept the clipped words with which he dismissed it. I will not say it has haunted me or disturbed my sleep, but certainly the name of Gerda Fogelweiss has often risen to my mind—a name without a face to go with it though sometimes in my imagination I do see a face that might be hers and the look on it chills me. What worries me most is a fearful suspicion that the Colonel, if he thinks of the episode at all, recalls it merely as one of the extraneous incidents that spiced up his combat duties.

We were already far across the Rhine that morning in the town of Gotha. The Colonel was a staff officer for the corps headquarters. I was attached to he was with the section—G 3—that planned operations. As part of Patton's army we had gone through France to the Moselle River, had captured Metz, crossed the Saar and the Rhine and, at the time I speak of, had two cities, Weimar and Jena, as immediate objectives. I, a first lieutenant, was the Colonel's assistant, but I was used more often for divisional liaison than for planning. In that late phase of the war it was necessary only to let the divisions go, like dogs from a leash; things were changing so rapidly. Our command post would move on every two or three days and when we set up our headquarters at Gotha in a large, unbombed building that had been the main office of an insurance firm none of us expected to stay long.

It was in Gotha that we heard about Ohrdruf. Corps staff equipment was still being unloaded from trucks and half tracks in front of the building and I was at the radio we had set up inside when a message came giving the details of the capture of the concentration camp there by one of our armored divisions. I showed the message to the Colonel. It looks like the worst yet, I said.

He studied the report which said that the number of bodies was estimated at around five thousand. (Later, we found Buchenwald but that was still only a name to us.) The Colonel gave a nod and handed the paper back to me. Like to see one of those things, he said. Then he asked: Feel like taking a look at the billet?

We had been sharing billets for the sake of convenience in spite of our difference in rank so that either of us could be quickly available in case something important came up at G 3 late at night. The Colonel though not too rank conscious always maintained an appropriate reserve toward me. He had been a National Guard officer with his commission in cavalry, but he could easily have been mistaken for a West Pointer. He was aloof and impassive. Indoors or out he always had a riding crop with him. In a way it was a break for me to have the same billet for the higher the rank the better the quarters. As a result I had already been in many comfortable German homes and had come to feel at ease in the company of the higher officers. We used fine mahogany tables for bridge and poker games and for brandy-and-champagne talk sessions when we weren't at the command post or out on a mission. I always looked forward to seeing each new temporary home. There is a fascination about entering with full privileges the houses of strangers.

The Colonel and I got our directions from the billeting officer and Stearns, our driver, took us the three blocks to the house in a jeep. This place was a duplex with a large apartment on each of the two floors. Our billet was the second floor apartment and we found the key in the lock of the back door with a note attached to it. Someone's left us a message, I said.

The Colonel's eyebrows lifted. Better read it, he said.

The note was written—printed rather—in labored English. I read it to the Colonel. To the American officers—I have left you my linens on the beds and have placed out my best china service. I leave my good blankets, and my silver too, not like the others. I would wish only that you water the plants if to be so kind. I am an only woman, this my only home. Please take care of my little home. It was signed Gerda Fogelweiss.

Well, for God's sake! the Colonel said. Water

her *plants!* Lieutenant, suppose you take charge of the watering operations

We both smiled and went inside. The door opened on a kitchen that reminded me of my family's kitchen at home. The porcelain of the sink shone. A Dutch clock was ticking on the wall. We went into the dining room, dim because of drawn velvet draperies, stood for a moment beside an oval table covered with a white linen cloth. There were two places (it was unlikely that we would use them) set with china and heavy silverware. This looks like a good deal, I said. It wasn't more luxurious than other billets, but we were unused to any effort to make us feel at home.

We might invite the Chief of Staff to dinner, the Colonel said. He profoundly disliked the Chief of Staff, who was known for paying more attention to his and the corps commander's comfort than to the war.

The living room was stiffly furnished with typical heavy German pieces, but there was a good Telefunken radio that worked. There were two glass-doored cabinets filled with delicate curios, some Dresden make, and potted rubber plants and ferns in profusion. I took the smaller of the two bedrooms and examined the linens on the twin beds in it and the soft blue blankets folded neatly at the foot of each of them. The Colonel, in the other room, had got similar treatment, apparently. Wouldn't mind spending a week here, he called to me.

Stearns came in lugging our Valpaks and bedrolls, his slung carbine banging faintly against his helmet as he laid them down. He obviously noticed the comfort of our quarters, but his face remained expressionless. Better get us back, the Colonel said, looking at his watch.

I had an impulse to water the plants before we left, but I didn't follow through on it.

Well, it's a tough war, the Colonel said, going down the staircase.

The command post was functioning almost normally by the time we returned to it. The officers' mess was being set up for lunch, and corps staff work was going on in the midst of rows of filing cabinets containing the insurance records of German civilians. Our Chief of Staff sent a memo around informing all of us that these files were not to be touched. I couldn't help wondering what good an insurance policy would be to any German now. Our large G-3 map already showed new advances with infantry units in Weimar and tanks heading east for Jena. I went back to the radio, and chalked up the more important messages on a blackboard until lunchtime, when the Colonel touched me on the shoulder and said, Let's get ourselves fed.

At the officers' mess, the talk first concerned the possibility of finding Contax cameras in the Zeiss

works at Jena, then became more solemn when a few of the officers who had already taken the thirty-mile trip to the southeast spoke of what they had seen at Ohrdruf. The Colonel listened but asked no questions. I was puzzled by his silence, and it occurred to me that I had never discovered in him any particular dislike of Germans. It was as though for him the war were being fought on a mathematical basis with the Germans as people outside his calculations. He was certainly interested by the war—it provided him with a responsible job—but he spoke frequently of home, where he had a wife and two children. He wrote them regularly and sometimes he would read aloud letters that his small girl had sent him. We seldom talked of anything that resembled politics; he did not seem interested. He was a brave man, I knew. I had seen him under strafing and shelling, and his air of calm efficiency had never deserted him.

The times I thought I knew him best were the occasional ones when he told an anecdote. He always spoke dryly, without seeming to be conscious of anything funny in what he was saying, but all at once his story would explode into some hilarious incongruity, and only when the rest of us laughed would a slow smile cross his face.

I was surprised when he said to me, after lunch, Let's go take a look at that camp. Chief wants to know about it. You might have Stearns out front in about fifteen minutes.

Sure, I said. I wanted to see Ohrdruf myself. I could not associate what I'd heard about such camps with the faces of Germans, either the prisoners I'd seen or the civilians in the streets. Since I had first heard of them, I had been looking for some special kind of brutality that only German faces would show, but it had been a futile search.

It was just after one o'clock when we drove off in the jeep. The sun was bright in the April sky, and the air was crisp but not unkind. The fields beyond Gotha already seemed to have taken on a new green, and mists rose gently from the wet earth, as though the last of winter were being exhaled. I sat in the back of the jeep with a map and gave Stearns his directions. Ohrdruf was not a hard town to find, because it was fairly large. I guessed that its population must be close to ten thousand. When we went through it, we didn't know that the mayor and his wife had hanged themselves after returning home from a forced trip through the camp. We did notice a sharp smell once we were in the outskirts. The Colonel sniffed and asked, What's that?

Lime, I said. I had been told about the lime.

In the town, some white surrender flags still hung from windows, and American vehicles clogged the cobbled streets. We asked an M.P. how to get to the camp, and he directed us just outside the eastern



part of the town we climbed a steep winding dirt road and came onto a sort of plateau where we saw the gates of the camp before us. Other American vehicles were there. The word had got around quickly. It always did.

The Colonel climbed stiffly from the jeep and turned back to the driver. Want to see this Bill?

Yes sir, Stearns said and the three of us went through the gates of the camp.

I suppose those places have been described enough by now. Movies have shown the stacks of bodies and the paraphernalia of death. In a way they are more real in the movies. We stood in a large, open yard formed by barracks and the high barbed wire fence that enclosed the camp and on that nice spring day looked at the dead on the ground still lying in their last attitudes as they had fallen. The guards had herded as many as they could find into this yard and machine gunned them just before American tanks had nosed up the hill outside. We saw deep lime pits but we did not know how deep they were or how many dead they contained and later in a field just beyond the camp we saw neat rows of trenches many of them not filled in the bodies in them covered only with lime for the camp's normal operations had been interrupted. We were told there was no gas chamber for this as such camps went was a small one. Beatings hangings starvation were the methods with so many per day to be eliminated.

The Colonel did not comment on what he saw. Every now and then, Stearns said. Jesus!

I felt lightheaded felt myself to be walking in slow motion. The three of us examined some of the barracks—flimsy narrow structures with burlap sacks for beds on the earth floor. The odor of excrement was high. In one a sign in German stated the number the barracks could hold a hundred and twenty eight. Why exactly a hundred and twenty eight? I asked.

The Colonel did not answer.

We went through a hospital barracks which at least had a wooden floor and Stearns nearly stumbled over an emaciated naked body. The Colonel touched the bony thigh with his riding crop indicating a number tattooed in purple. The number was E4138. For some reason I still remember it.

We stayed in the camp about an hour then drove back to Gotha where we immediately sensed new activity at the corps command post. In the operations room we learned that we would stop only the one night in Gotha. Our next headquarters would be in Weimar. We stayed late in the insurance building making preparations for moving on the next morning.

It was long after dark when we arrived back at the apartment. I was very tired and was not even

thinking of Ohrdruf as I got ready for bed so perhaps it was simply out of habit that I slept in my bedroll instead of taking advantage of the comforts Gerda Fogelweiss had provided. I rose at six and dressed in faint daylight.

The Colonel fully dressed his helmet already on came to the doorway of my room. Did you water the plants, Lieutenant? he asked me.

Forgot sir, I said.

I smiled but he did not smile in return. He was carrying his riding crop and a moment later as he walked slowly ahead of me through the dining room he suddenly caught it in a fold of the tablecloth and drew the cloth and everything on it swiftly from the table. China shattered on the floor. The Colonel ground the heel of his boot on a silver cream server. Filthy people, he said.

He went to the living room and regarded the plants solemnly. He kicked one over and stamped on its leaves. Methodically he did this with all the plants. I could feel the excitement going through me. For that moment at least, the same feeling that possessed him possessed me. I wrenched open the door of one of the curio cabinets and swept the contents to the floor. We stamped on them together and then looked about us for other things to destroy. The bedrooms. We ripped the sheets from the beds and tore them into strips. We used our pocketknives to do as good a job on the blankets.

On our way back through the living room carrying our bedrolls and Valpaks the Colonel knocked the Telefunken radio to the floor and precisely drove his toe into the works in the rear. He was enjoying himself and so was I. We did not need to communicate. We knew what we were doing. I had not been able to see it in their faces but now I knew it was there. We went on with our work. Gerda Fogelweiss the Colonel said as though getting satisfaction from the sound of the name and sent the remaining curio cabinet crashing to the floor. I was busy breaking a nicely carved chair.

There was a crystal chandelier to come down. It came down. The Colonel began loosening the heavily flowered wallpaper with his knife and I helped him tear off great strips of it. Then he had an idea. He beckoned me to follow him into the bathroom. There he plugged up the tub and turned on its faucets hard. We left the water splashing into it and went to the kitchen. He plugged the kitchen sink and turned on its faucets.

We stood there in the kitchen, the Colonel apparently rummaging, until the water began to overflow the sink. Looks like time for breakfast, he said. We carried our Valpaks and bedrolls downstairs after the Colonel had carefully locked all the doors inside and out, and taken the keys with him. We found Stearns just pulling up at the curb with

the jeep The Colonel tossed his handful of keys into the sewer and climbed in Gerda is in for a little surprise, he said to me and a slow smile came on his face We watered the plants didn't we?

Why necessarily Gerda Fogelweiss? The question did not bother me until some time later as we were driving along a good stretch of Autobahn on the way from Gotha to Weimar It was another pleasant day but it was partly spoiled for me by the thought of a German woman coming back to her home and finding it the way we had left it We had arbitrarily made her responsible I decided and for a moment that seemed enough of an answer However there was still something missing about it all and for a while I could not think what it was Then it came to me as though it had been jolted into my mind by a sharp swerve Stearns had just made to avoid a bad place in the road Colonel, I said

He was in the front seat and he pushed his helmet back on his head turned and looked at me What's up? he asked

That woman isn't going to understand I said She won't know why we did it

All the better he said

No I said We should have left her a note

The Colonel seemed to be considering this, and then he patted his helmet back firmly into position and regarded the blue haze hanging over the German fields Forget it he said

Neither of us ever spoke of the affair to the other again

## STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 Why does the Colonel wreck the apartment?
- 2 What function in the story does the description of a concentration camp have? With what does it contrast?
- 3 What sort of woman is Gerda Fogelweiss?
- 4 Is Gerda Fogelweiss responsible for the conditions in the camp?
- 5 Why does the Colonel take offense at the request to water her plants? Is there irony here? Where?
- 6 Take note of the various severe contrasts the camp and the neat apartment the care for plants and the lack of care for human beings implied in Gerda the sophistication of the Colonel to war and his sensitivity to the situation What is Alpert trying to indicate by these devices?
- 7 Why does the narrator feel that the destruction of the apartment has no meaning without a note telling why? Could the reason be told in a note? Would Gerda Fogelweiss ever know why? Why does the Colonel say "Forget it"?
- 8 What is the further theme of the story? Do you think that we would have further war if the Gerda Fogelweisses of the world understood why the apartment was wrecked? Does Alpert suggest that there is any way of

understanding? Does he say anything about the nature of war?



## Pink and Blue

*William Carlos Williams*

The editors were anxious to include a story by William Carlos Williams whose contributions to the fields of fiction poetry and medicine have been of unusual importance The story which follows *Pink and Blue* was suggested by Dr Williams himself with the statement that he regards it as one of his best

The contemporary short story as contemporary fiction in general is deeply concerned with the symbolic nature of experience and its psychological roots Since interior experience tends to be ambiguous in shape the texture of many modern works of fiction reflects this ambiguity and lends to the story a vagueness which is sometimes troubling often frustrating and in some instances frightening

The stories of William Carlos Williams of which *Pink and Blue* is a most representative example are marked by a directness of approach and an economy of style which differentiate them sharply from an entire class of modern fiction The language in the story is direct simple almost blunt It lacks stylistic adornment of either syntax or vocabulary and even those marks of punctuation which custom and rule demand such as the quotation mark are eliminated in every case where they serve no useful purpose of their own There is no description of the setting beyond the minimum no philosophical digressions or comment no description except in the broadest outline of any of the characters The action of the story is not delayed and every device of fiction which might tend to delay it is removed By the third paragraph the major elements of the story are fully under way

It would be a mistake to conclude however from the nature of the presentation which seems to emphasize the plot and to minimize the characters that this is a story unrelated to the general trends of modern fiction On the contrary there is an important relationship between the style of the story and the elements of human nature which it proposes to elucidate The central figure Belle is a direct uncomplicated woman of no great intellectual complexity She represents the basic power of the drives which motivate us and the imperious necessity of these drives is made the more manifest by the fact that she is unaware of them as such and quite incapable of considering them intellectually She is not of course an ignorant woman but a simple one in whose simplicity is

to be found the power as the author sees it of the un-complicated motive as opposed to the weakness of the complex Belle shares many of the vigorous and lusty aspects of Ida in Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock* and in many ways she represents a similar attitude towards experience. In Belle's case the drive which moves her is the need for respectability which is in part symbolized for her by legal and formal marriage. You will note in this regard that when because he missed the road the minister failed to come on time Belle was absolutely adamant that the ceremony should take place that night.

She had made up her mind to be married that night and that night she was going to be married.

The character of Belle's husband George is clear from the start simple direct and subject of course to the influences of drink. He is in no respect a subtle man and there is no evidence that he has any tender love or understanding for Belle. We learn early in the story that he was lonesome after a while lacking a woman and Belle whom he has learned about through the mails is clearly an answer to this need. The contrast with Favier is sharp and clear. Favier is kind thoughtful and devoted. His love appears to have all the qualities which a woman would prefer to the bluntness and roughness of George's passions but for some reason Favier is not able to offer marriage. Her normal preferences and her normal concern for her emotional welfare are swept aside in the face of her need for marriage as a symbol of status and Belle rejects Favier in favor of George. But she really does not reject Favier having achieved what she wanted and having entered into marriage for the simplest of reasons in a way she perceives no incompatibility between her status as a wife and her correspondence with Favier. George could probably never make clear to her his objections even if they were ever clear to him.

The meaning of the story is of course to be found in the relationship of pink and blue. At the beginning Belle appears dressed up in pink finery even to a touch of powder to her cheeks. When she is dying she wants one thing of Favier to be buried in finery of blue. The two colors have meaning to her as they do to the story as a whole. There are many suggestions which come to mind pink is for girls blue is for boys and Belle's approaching death may mean the loss of her femininity into the masculine coldness of the grave. Blue is also the color of the Virgin Mary and in that context a symbol of spiritual values while pink is a faded version of red or the symbol of passion and vigor. Pink is also associated with pleasure blue with despondency. Whatever the meaning it is clear from the structure that the author has emphasized the distinction and it will be useful for the student to examine the various possibilities with care.

In a more general context Williams is disclosing some of the deeper recesses of the human spirit not in its intellectual form but in its warm simplicity. These recesses are not the easier to understand because they are presented simply their ambiguities are as marked as those of the more sophisticated treatments. Modern literature does not conform to any type or structure it is a point of

view and Williams has this point of view within a frame work that only suggests the more traditional narrative emphases of fiction.

THE BANDLERS had had a good many men at Fernycroft since they bought the place ten years back. Most interesting specimens some of them—if one may speak so of any human being—whose list would be a story in itself. They'd stay a month or two, sometimes perhaps six months then quit or get themselves fired for one reason or another. George was the current incumbent of the job. George Tompkins not a bad sort—in his way.

A splendid voice good looking and a fine worker, the only thing was he liked the hard cider. That's the first thing he spoke of when he came there. He was willing to stay the winter but the cider barrel he wanted full up.

He was lonesome too after a while lacking a woman. The story was that he'd been married several years before lost his wife at the time of childbirth. But in general he was a good man and things were going along pretty well under his care.

Then one day after he had been on the place a month or so he showed Mrs. Bandler the photograph of a woman—the smooth round smiling face of a woman near thirty years of age as far as could be made out from the portrait.

What do you think of her?

Good looking who is she?

I guess I'm going to marry her said George.

What! said Mrs. B., and looked again at the picture which she held in her hand. It was an interesting simple face with a direct noncommittal glance to it that was neither coquettish nor serious a face—like the countryside a country woman dressed up to be photographed that vague placeless look of our rural anonymities.

Well George she looks all right. Where did you get her?

I haven't got her yet. That's just her photograph said George.

Lonesome and with nothing else to do of an evening he had stumbled across one of those odd features sometimes found in country newspapers a

Cupid's Club where those inclined to matrimony might find their mates. He read there an appeal had answered it and here he was with the woman's photograph in his hand ready for the next step. He liked the picture.

Mrs. Bandler thought quickly and decided to encourage him. It might work out well.

A week later during a small afternoon bridge which she was giving for several friends from the city came a knock at the house door. It was George.

Looking past him there standing in the middle of the front lawn Mrs Bandler saw a figure She gasped as George with mingled pride and embarrassment, told her who it was

Yes Ma'am there she is

Belle came forward quite unabashed, a plump attractive thing dressed all in pink from head to foot hat dress stockings shoes, even her complexion touched up to match She was really a picture—a veritable azalea bush in blossom though not quite so young as the photo might give one to think Yet she was attractive

George, of course was beside himself with the excitement of pleasure anticipated He waited upon Mrs B's approval then seeing that she—tremendously amused, really—was not antagonistic, he said She just came down from Clinton Springs so I could look her over What do you think of her now? he added in a lower voice

Fine said Mrs Bandler

That was enough for George Belle and he made up their minds on the spot to be married as soon as she could go back home get her things together and come down again And within a week true to her promise Belle was there her few belongings at her side

Mrs B who was fully alert to the dramatic possibilities of the situation had gone out of her way to heighten the effect It was October by that time so she and her little colored maid decorated the parlor of the old farm with autumn leaves and wild flowers

We had it real pretty, she told me afterward Bessie was to be bridesmaid and Pa and I were to give the bride away George had spoken to the minister and everything was arranged for that night

So there they sat Supper had been over for some time and George and Belle were all dressed up waiting the others along with them, the three witnesses The minister didn't come

It got to be around ten o'clock Finally George, who had been hitting the hard cider pretty freely during the afternoon began to get mad and God damn the minister up and down He got madder and madder but it did no good After a while Mrs Bandler suggested that something must have gone wrong and that they'd better wait till morning

No Siree! not Belle She had made up her mind to be married that night and that night she was going to be married

So George and Pa got into the buggy and went down for the minister He had missed the road earlier in the evening and failing to find the house had turned around and gone home to await developments which was after all the sensible thing to do

And George and Belle were married after all That was that

But the very day following the ceremony things

began to happen Belle's tall lanky son along with her father, a decrepit old man arrived and installed themselves on the newly wedded couple Belle hadn't said a word of this to George that was probably the reason she had been in such a sweat to get it over with the night before knowing that they were on the way But George was crazy about her by this time and took it all good naturedly after the profanity of his first surprise

Well there they were

The arrangement had its disturbing aspects, but Mrs Bandler looking forward to the winter thought it at least tolerable George however, soon found things not so fully to his satisfaction Belle in the high dignity of her new position set rapidly to work She first laid in a complete stock of aluminum ware—on the installment plan—bought dishes bedding supplies of all sorts right and left far beyond George's ability to pay for them and finally, to cap the climax had visiting cards printed for herself Mrs George Tompkins, At Home Wednesdays

Well when Mrs Bandler saw that she puffed her lips nodded her head and said that that was fine Belle was extremely proud of them

So things went along George stopped some of the credit at the stores the lanky boy did a little work here and there and the old man just sat around

As the weeks advanced, however George began to grow suspicious of Belle She was always writing letters—in a good hand be it said and on the neatest paper But there was too often a little flurry when he entered the sitting room from outdoors a feeling as of something having been hidden—or so George thought—and he didn't like it

Who are you writing to? he had asked her several times

Oh people back home, was all she told him But he grew more and more uneasy Until finally one day when she had given several letters to her boy to take to the town and mail George waylaid the kid and took them away from him to find out for himself what was going on

And he got an eyeful With the open letters in his hand he started for home muttering and cursing Two of them had been of trifling interest but the third was something else again It had been addressed to a man in the next village a newcomer as George discovered later who was certainly on terms of the greatest intimacy with his wife

George was wild He accused Belle of everything in the world, reasonable and unreasonable beat her threatened to throw her out of the place and then crazy about her really, quieted down and took her to himself once more

It seems that Belle had had a little house up in Clinton Springs still had one in fact where she had lived for many years with her old father and the boy

It was from this place following George's answer to her advertisement in the Cupid's Club that she had written him. But the house was not her own: she had been a kept woman.

The lover, an oldish man, could not or would not marry her: whence, apparently, Belle's longing to have a proper Mrs. applied to her name.

But this fellow Favier was not content to give the woman up so easily. When she had married George, he had moved down to the neighboring village to be near her to protect her and perhaps—who knows?—to win her back again. It was to him the letter had been directed.

Winter came on and the Bandlers, leaving their summer home and the new worries it entailed, moved back to the city, not however before George had become fully aware of the situation as it concerned Belle and Mr. Favier. To hell with him was George's final comment and with that Mrs. Bandler made up her mind everything would go along well enough for the next few months at least.

But earlier in the season she had one day, very much to her surprise, received a call from this same curious Mr. Favier. He actually came up to the big house one day to find out about Belle, to ask if she were really married, to see if she were getting along all right. A quiet, middle-aged man, respectable and patient, an extraordinary love for and devotion to Belle stood out from every motion that he made, every word that he uttered. It was a queer case.

And so the winter set in.

About the middle of January, however, came a letter which made Mrs. Bandler hop post-haste into a train and head off again into the now deserted countryside in the dead of winter, surely by every sign from the car windows on that two-hour ride into the snowy, frozen hills. Belle had written that George was going to kill her, had already tried it and that she was in direst need.

Once before, about the first of December, Mrs. B had had to go back to the farm to settle a fight, once when George had beaten Belle and driven her and her tribe out into the deep snow—through which they had to walk to town and find a place for themselves that night as best they could. But the very next morning George had gone down with the milk as usual and seeing Belle standing in the cold at the corner of the street by the Inn, it had been too much for him. He had taken her up, gathered her family along with her and installed them down in the cottage once more. Mrs. B didn't know whether to laugh or to weep.

But this time it was different. Arriving at the wintry station, Mrs. B decided not to go directly out to the farm. Though she wasn't of a timid nature, she felt it would be wiser to be a little on her guard against getting mixed up alone with a drunken

maniac. She put up at the Inn after arranging with the village cop—whom she knew well—to watch for George in the morning and to arrest him.

This was done as planned. Tompkins was taken before the local Justice of the Peace. Mrs. B told her story and paid the fellow off; he was put on the next train by the police and told never to show his face in the county again. Goodbye, George Tompkins.

Then Mrs. B went out to the farm and told Belle what had happened.

Who arrested him? asked she.

Ed Harris.

Yes, I know him, he's a fine-looking fellow, was all Belle had to say in reply.

And so, after a good talk, it was arranged for her to stay on for the present at least, to keep the place going while a local farmer was engaged to come up every day for the milking, hauling and other work.

But to make certain that things were not to run down too fast, Mrs. B thought it best to remain there herself for a week or more. And Belle took charge and told again the whole story about Mr. Favier, about herself, about George.

Then, after a few days, she turned once more to her writing, the neat firm hand, the spotless note-paper. Mrs. Bandler watched the woman for awhile, then broke in upon her occupation.

What in the world are you writing all those letters for, Belle, she said at last.

Oh, I'm writing to the Cupid's Club, Belle replied.

The woman was incorrigible.

This is from a fellow who wants to marry me, she added, smiling and showing a letter. But I don't think I'll take him.

Mrs. Bandler shook her head and laughed out right, thinking to herself, well, yes, she's what they call a bitch, all right, a regular bitch. Just a la la. She must have driven poor George crazy, she and the hard cider.

Years later, when Belle had passed finally from those parts, one day there came a visitor to the farm. Mrs. Bandler was confined to her bed with a sore throat, but the maid said it was an old man and that he wanted to see her very particularly, could he come up?

All right, let him come.

It was Mr. Favier, looking serious and humbled. Mrs. B was shocked at the change in his appearance; she felt sorry for the man, whatever it might be that was the matter with him, and invited him to sit down.

It's about poor Belle, he began. I thought you'd like to know. She's gone.

He was brokenhearted, sat there and cried his eyes out. Then he went on to tell the story. After she had left the Bandler farm so many years now past, Belle had returned to her home in Clinton.

Springs And there she remained writing her letters as usual under the patronage of Mr Favier until one day he noticed when he dropped in to see her in passing that she was no longer well He tried to make her go to bed but she refused No she said not now I'm going to die He tried to reassure her as best he could but to no avail

Yes, Belle went on calmly I'm going to die And I've got something I want to ask you

It was no use trying to stop her she forced the old man into a chair by the sheer certainty of her manner and compelled him to listen

I'm going to die she repeated and I want you to do something for me after I'm gone Promise me now that you'll do it

Mr Favier had no heart for further argument he promised

All right then, said Belle this is what I want I want you to lay me out in a blue dress with blue stockings and blue shoes just the way I'm telling you and I want you to give me a funeral with flowers

The man could neither speak nor move Then I want you to bury me by my Ma she continued and I want a tombstone and I want my name carved on it Belle Tompkins

These wishes Mr Favier faithfully carried out and passing through the village on his way back from the funeral he had come to Mrs Bandler to tell her this last news of his dearly beloved friend

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1 How much information do you have and from what sources concerning the character of Mrs Bandler? of George Tompkins?

2 What point of view towards the experiences is held by the narrator? Where do you find evidence of his point of view?

3 What is the significance to the story as a whole of the fact that George has met Belle through the medium of an advertisement in a lonely hearts club?

4 In what ways is Favier's attitude towards Belle different from that of George? In what ways is Mrs Bandler's attitude towards Belle different from that of George?

5 For what reasons does Belle after her marriage continue her correspondence with other men? Do you think she is wicked? Do you think she is immoral? Is George's anger justified?

6 How much of the experience of George and Belle do the Bandlers comprehend?

7 Account for Belle's appearance in pink and her desire to be buried in blue What do you think the author intended by this chromatic opposition?



# THE NOVEL







## INTRODUCTION

### *The Novel*

We have seen in approaching the short story that the criteria of judgment are really of two kinds: those which are based upon considerations of formal structure and those which have to do with standards of literary excellence in general. These standards of excellence which demand honesty, universality, importance of theme and mature comment do not vary from *genre* to *genre*. In truth we must apply them to poetry, to satire, to drama, and to the different forms of fiction with equal conviction. But different forms of writing present certain specialized problems which have their origin in the forms themselves, and it is necessary in order to be able to achieve good judgment to understand the terms which the author has set himself and to understand the purposes and the limitations which formal patterns impose.

The novel is not a very rigid nor a very standardized form of writing. It can be of almost any length; it can employ an infinite variety of techniques; it can consist of different types of writing; it can change viewpoint in the middle; it can concern almost anything. In many cases it is impossible to decide whether a piece of fiction is a long short story or a short novel. But it is precisely because of the looseness of this formal requirement that the novel has always been the most popular type of fiction both to writers and to readers.

The essential element which serves to distinguish a novel from other forms of fiction is not, as might be supposed, its length, but rather its purpose. In general it is the purpose of a novel, regardless of its length, to reproduce a substantial segment of experience to cover a protracted period of living. In some cases a novel will in fact take a protagonist from birth to death; in other cases the time sequence may be very short, but in all cases the purpose of the novel is to create its effect by affording the reader a long or detailed acquaintanceship with the persons involved.

You will note that in both the short story and the drama the writer is concerned with a crisis situation: a small representative slice of life into which the reader enters immediately. In the short story and the drama all the factors which have produced the crisis have matured and come to a head prior to the opening of the story or play, and the reader is in

the position of being primarily concerned with the working out of the problem which already has been posed. This crisis element can best be seen in a play like *Oedipus Rex*, where the slaying of Laius and the marriage to Jocasta—the two sins which Oedipus commits—have taken place well before the opening scene, so that the area of the play is purely that of discovering how Oedipus is going to act under these trying conditions. There is, in other words, no attempt to suggest that there is any possibility that Oedipus will not commit his crimes simply because the crimes have already been committed and the terms of the struggle set.

A novel, however, is in a position to begin at the beginning and to trace in as fine detail as it wishes the development of the major crisis. If *Oedipus Rex* were a novel, for example, the author could show Oedipus' early childhood, his relations with his family and with the gods, the encounter after many years with a man whom Oedipus does not recognize as his father, the fight, the death of Laius, the wooing and winning of Jocasta, the solving of the Sphinx's riddle and the consequent freeing of Thebes from the curse, the years of his reign as king. All of this story could be told in detail; the plot could be disclosed slowly and with due suspense; the episodes could be colorfully described and the story led to the point where Oedipus discovers that he has in fact been guilty of parricide and incest. It is at this point where the play opens, but it would be well along in a novel before this climactic situation would be reached. All the story in condensed and concentrated form is told in the play through exposition, but only for the purpose of enabling the reader to understand the circumstances of the opening action.

This ability of the novel to trace the development of a crisis implies certain things that it can do that are not possible in a short story or a play. Since it is possible to portray the characters in a novel over a long period of time and to watch them in an infinity of incident and relationship, it is possible to have a deeper and more complete understanding of them, just as we tend to understand what our friends do against a background of knowledge of them which tells us what sort of people they are and what kinds of attitudes they take. The novelist may, in his treatment of earlier events, foreshadow future development of character more completely than is possible in the short story or play, precisely because he can arrange his material in such a way that the motives, attitudes, characteristics and circumstances which operate upon his protagonist are made clear through a variety and multiplicity of example. Thus the knowledge which we may gain of the behavior of a character in a novel is based upon an essentially long relation with him, and in consequence we have

a firm basis upon which to understand the working out of the central problem or crisis

This serves to call to mind the different ways in which we learn what the author wants us to learn. In the short story or play our knowledge is confined to what is imparted to us directly by way of selective exposition. Such exposition has two major limitations: it is restricted on the whole to material which has a direct and important bearing upon the crisis situation and leaves out a good deal of material of peripheral or lesser importance or relevance so that we are in the position of seeing what is admittedly a partial picture and it is apprehended by the reader through the pronouncement of the author rather than through the reader's own evaluation of the anterior experiences involved. That is, it is not possible in the drama or the short story except in certain limited ways to learn the nature or significance of the prior action through seeing the prior action directly. It is necessary that the author intervene not only to describe the prior action but also to explain what it represents, which we must accept without question if the story or drama is to have meaning. In the novel on the other hand the maturation of the crisis throughout a comparatively long period of time can be understood directly by the reader without the need for didactic interference by the author as the reader participates directly in the lesser as well as in the more important events. There is thus built up in the novel a sense of the totality of experience which the short story and drama cannot because of their form adequately give. This totality is of especial importance when the novel proposes to inquire into the ways of human behavior because only in this way can the complexity of human motivation be examined in detail.

For this reason we find in the novel for the most part those studies of human conduct which tend to describe the relationships of individuals to complex social, environmental, and heredity patterns. The novel is a form in which it is possible to portray an individual against a complicated background and to show the many forces—political, psychological, familial, religious, and social—which modify and affect his behavior. Often the sole purpose of a novel, especially those of the past seventy-five years, is simply that of setting man in a pattern of one sort or another and by so doing affirming or attacking the pattern or the assumptions which underlie it. The breadth of a novel can be great, its scope wide, its analyses detailed and leisurely, its pace orderly and slow, its attention to development careful, and its explanations complete. This does not mean that all novels are like this, but it is in the potentiality to achieve complete development that the novel differs substantially from the other forms of writing.

The essay which follows by Henry James pro-

vides a most illuminating insight into the way in which the form and purposes of the novel were conceived in the early part of the twentieth century. Henry James was a great craftsman, and throughout his essay it is clear that he is primarily concerned with the treatment of his subjects rather than with any desire to reproduce reality in the accepted sense of the term. Since his day, however, authors confronted with the problems of the contemporary scene have modified their conceptions of what the scope of a novel should be, and in doing so have stated principles which differ markedly from those set down by James. One of the most fascinating and rewarding aspects of the study of literature is to discover how attitudes change with the passage of time and with the advent of new conditions which the artist must confront. It would be useful to the student to assess some modern novels by the standards of James and to note by so doing the changes in viewpoint which the past fifty years have brought about. It would also be useful to list those qualities of the novel discussed by James which are peculiar to the novel alone and which cannot apply to other forms of fiction. Lastly, it is suggested that James's point of view be borne in mind in reading the novels which follow, and that note be taken of the extent to which it applies or does not apply, as the case may be.



## The Art of Fiction

*Henry James*

It is not surprising that so self-conscious an artist as Henry James should have been absorbed in the craft of his art. Theory and practice were for him inextricably interrelated. In addition to the early essay reprinted here, he wrote critical papers on Dickens, Hawthorne, Turgenev, Balzac, Flaubert, Sand, Zola, and others; the Prefaces to the New York edition of his works constitute a monumental examination of the art of fiction; the letters and Notebooks are full of allusions to the artist and his problems; and the psychology and role of the writer make up a significant theme in his fiction itself. He wrote in the Preface to *Roderick Random*: "These notes represent over a considerable course the continuity of an artist's endeavour, the growth of his whole operative consciousness and best of all perhaps their own tendency to multiply with the implication thereby of a memory much enriched." The enrichment of memory

brought on through the efforts of one of the most subtle intelligences in all of literature is James's aim—and achievement

I SHOULD not have affixed so comprehensive a title to these few remarks necessarily wanting in any completeness upon a subject the full consideration of which would carry us far did I not seem to discover a pretext for my temerity in the interesting pamphlet lately published under this name by Mr Walter Besant Mr Besant's lecture at the Royal Institution—the original form of his pamphlet—appears to indicate that many persons are interested in the art of fiction and are not indifferent to such remarks as those who practise it may attempt to make about it I am therefore anxious not to lose the benefit of this favourable association and to edge in a few words under cover of the attention which Mr Besant is sure to have excited There is something very encouraging in his having put into form certain of his ideas on the mystery of story telling

It is a proof of life and curiosity—curiosity on the part of the brotherhood of novelists as well as on the part of their readers Only a short time ago it might have been supposed that the English novel was not what the French call *discutable* It had no air of having a theory a conviction a consciousness of itself behind it—of being the expression of an artistic faith, the result of choice and comparison I do not say it was necessarily the worse for that it would take much more courage than I possess to intimate that the form of the novel as Dickens and Thackeray (for instance) saw it had any taint of incompleteness It was however *naïf* (if I may help myself out with another French word) and evidently if it be destined to suffer in any way for having lost its *naïvete* it has now an idea of making sure of the corresponding advantages During the period I have alluded to there was a comfortable, good humoured feeling abroad that a novel is a novel, as a pudding is a pudding and that our only business with it could be to swallow it But within a year or two for some reason or other there have been signs of returning animation—the era of discussion would appear to have been to a certain extent opened Art lives upon discussion upon experiment upon curiosity, upon variety of attempt upon the exchange of views and the comparison of standpoints and there is a presumption that those times when no one has anything particular to say about it and has no reason to give for practice or preference, though they may be times of honour, are not times of development—are times, possibly even a little of dulness The successful application of any art is a delightful spectacle but the theory too is interesting and though there is a great deal of the latter without the

former I suspect there has never been a genuine success that has not had a latent core of conviction Discussion suggestion formulation, these things are fertilizing when they are frank and sincere Mr Besant has set an excellent example in saying what he thinks for his part about the way in which fiction should be written as well as about the way in which it should be published for his view of the art carried on into an appendix covers that too Other labourers in the same field will doubtless take up the argument they will give it the light of their experience and the effect will surely be to make our interest in the novel a little more what it had for some time threatened to fail to be—a serious active inquiring interest under protection of which this delightful study may in moments of confidence venture to say a little more what it thinks of itself

It must take itself seriously for the public to take it so The old superstition about fiction being wicked has doubtless died out in England but the spirit of it lingers in a certain oblique regard directed toward any story which does not more or less admit that it is only a joke Even the most jocular novel feels in some degree the weight of the proscription that was formerly directed against literary levity the jocularity does not always succeed in passing for orthodoxy It is still expected though perhaps people are ashamed to say it that a production which is after all only a make believe (for what else is a story?) shall be in some degree apologetic—shall renounce the pretension of attempting really to represent life This of course any sensible wide awake story declines to do for it quickly perceives that the tolerance granted to it on such a condition is only an attempt to stifle it disguised in the form of generosity The old evangelical hostility to the novel which was as explicit as it was narrow, and which regarded it as little less favourable to our immortal part than a stage play was in reality far less insulting The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life When it relinquishes this attempt the same attempt that we see on the canvas of the painter it will have arrived at a very strange pass It is not expected of the picture that it will make itself humble in order to be forgiven and the analogy between the art of the painter and the art of the novelist is, so far as I am able to see complete Then inspiration is the same then process (allowing for the different quality of the vehicle) is the same their success is the same They may learn from each other, they may explain and sustain each other Then cause is the same and the honour of one is the honour of another The Mahometans think a picture an unholy thing but it is a long time since any Christian did and it is therefore the more odd that in the Christian mind the traces (dissimulated though they may be) of a

suspicion of the sister art should linger to this day. The only effectual way to lay it to rest is to emphasize the analogy to which I just alluded—to insist on the fact that as the picture is reality so the novel is history. That is the only general description (which does it justice) that we may give of the novel. But history also is allowed to represent life, it is not, any more than painting expected to apologize. The subject matter of fiction is stored up likewise in documents and records and if it will not give itself away as they say in California it must speak with assurance with the tone of the historian. Certain accomplished novelists have a habit of giving themselves away which must often bring tears to the eyes of people who take their fiction seriously. I was lately stuck in reading over many pages of Anthony Trollope with his want of discretion in this particular. In a digression a parenthesis or an aside he concedes to the reader that he and this trusting friend are only making believe. He admits that the events he narrates have not really happened and that he can give his narrative any turn the reader may like best. Such a betrayal of a sacred office seems to me I confess a terrible crime. It is what I mean by the attitude of apology and it shocks me every whit as much in Trollope as it would have shocked me in Gibbon or Macaulay. It implies that the novelist is less occupied in looking for the truth (the truth of course I mean that he assumes the premises that we must grant him whatever they may be) than the historian and in doing so it deprives him at a stroke of all his standing room. To represent and illustrate the past the actions of men is the task of either writer and the only difference that I can see is in proportion as he succeeds to the honour of the novelist consisting as it does in his having more difficulty in collecting his evidence which is so far from being purely literary. It seems to me to give him a great character the fact that he has at once so much in common with the philosopher and the painter this double analogy is a magnificent heritage.

It is of all this evidently that Mr. Besant is full when he insists upon the fact that fiction is one of the *fine arts* deserving in its turn of all the honours and emoluments that have hitherto been reserved for the successful profession of music poetry painting architecture. It is impossible to insist too much on so important a truth and the place that Mr. Besant demands for the work of the novelist may be represented, a trifle less abstractly by saying that he demands not only that it shall be reputed artistic, but that it shall be reputed very artistic indeed. It is excellent that he should have struck this note for his doing so indicates that there was need of it that his proposition may be to many people a novelty. One rubs one's eyes at the thought but the rest of

Mr. Besant's essay confirms the revelation I suspect in truth that it would be possible to confirm it still further and that one would not be far wrong in saying that in addition to the people to whom it has never occurred that a novel ought to be artistic there are a great many others who if this principle were urged upon them would be filled with an indefinable mistrust. They would find it difficult to explain their repugnance but it would operate strongly to put them on their guard. Art in our Protestant communities where so many things have got so strangely twisted about is supposed in certain circles to have some vaguely injurious effect upon those who make it an important consideration who let it weigh in the balance. It is assumed to be opposed in some mysterious manner to morality to amusement to instruction. When it is embodied in the work of the painter (the sculptor is another affair!) you know what it is it stands there before you in the honesty of pink and green and a gilt frame you can see the worst of it at a glance and you can be on your guard. But when it is introduced into literature it becomes more insidious—there is danger of its hurting you before you know it. Literature should be either instructive or amusing and there is in many minds an impression that these artistic preoccupations the search for form contribute to neither end interfere indeed with both. They are too frivolous to be edifying and too serious to be diverting and they are moreover puzzling and paradoxical and superfluous. That I think represents the manner in which the latent thought of many people who read novels as an exercise in skipping would explain itself if it were to become articulate. They would argue of course that a novel ought to be good but they would interpret this term in a fashion of their own which indeed would vary considerably from one critic to another. One would say that being good means representing virtuous and aspiring characters placed in prominent positions another would say that it depends on a happy ending on a distribution of the last of prizes pensions husbands wives babies millions appended paragraphs and cheerful remarks. Another still would say that it means being full of incident and movement so that we shall wish to jump ahead to see who was the mysterious stranger, and if the stolen will was ever found and shall not be distracted from this pleasure by any tiresome analysis or description. But they would all agree that the artistic idea would spoil some of their fun. One would hold it accountable for all the description another would see it revealed in the absence of sympathy. Its hostility to a happy ending would be evident and it might even in some cases render any ending at all impossible. The ending of a novel is for many persons like that of a good dinner, a course of dessert and ices and the artist in

fiction is regarded as a sort of meddling doctor who forbids agreeable aftertastes. It is therefore true that this conception of Mr. Besant's of the novel as a superior form encounters not only a negative but a positive indifference. It matters little that as a work of art it should really be as little or as much of its essence to supply happy endings, sympathetic characters and an objective tone as if it were a work of mechanics; the association of ideas, however incongruous, might easily be too much for it if an eloquent voice were not sometimes raised to call attention to the fact that it is at once as free and as serious a branch of literature as any other.

Certainly this might sometimes be doubted in presence of the enormous number of works of fiction that appeal to the credulity of our generation, for it might easily seem that there could be no great character in a commodity so quickly and easily produced. It must be admitted that good novels are much compromised by bad ones, and that the field at large suffers discredit from overcrowding. I think, however, that this injury is only superficial, and that the superabundance of written fiction proves nothing against the principle itself. It has been vulgarized like all other kinds of literature like every thing else to-day, and it has proved more than some kinds accessible to vulgarization. But there is as much difference as there ever was between a good novel and a bad one: the bad is swept with all the daubed canvases and spoiled marble into some unvisited limbo or infinite rubbish yard beneath the back-windows of the world, and the good subsists and emits its light and stimulates our desire for perfection. As I shall take the liberty of making but a single criticism of Mr. Besant, whose tone is so full of the love of his art, I may as well have done with it at once. He seems to me to mistake in attempting to say so definitely beforehand what sort of an affair the good novel will be. To indicate the danger of such an error as that has been the purpose of these few pages to suggest that certain traditions on the subject applied *a priori* have already had much to answer for, and that the good health of an art which undertakes so immediately to reproduce life must demand that it be perfectly free. It lives upon exercise and the very meaning of exercise is freedom. The only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel, without incurring the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be interesting. That general responsibility rests upon it, but it is the only one I can think of. The ways in which it is at liberty to accomplish this result (of interesting us) strike me as innumerable and such as can only suffer from being marked out or fenced in by prescription. They are as various as the temperament of man, and they are successful in proportion as they reveal a particular mind, different from others. A novel is in its

broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life, that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression. But there will be no intensity at all, and therefore no value, unless there is freedom to feel and say. The tracing of a line to be followed, of a tone to be taken, of a form to be filled out, is a limitation of that freedom and a suppression of the very thing that we are most curious about. The form it seems to me is to be appreciated after the fact; then the author's choice has been made, his standard has been indicated, then we can follow lines and directions and compare tones and resemblances. Then in a word we can enjoy one of the most charming of pleasures: we can estimate quality; we can apply the test of execution. The execution belongs to the author alone; it is what is most personal to him, and we measure him by that. The advantage, the luxury, as well as the torment and responsibility of the novelist is that there is no limit to what he may attempt as an executant—no limit to his possible experiments, efforts, discoveries, successes. Here it is especially that he works step by step, like his brother of the brush, of whom we may always say that he has painted his picture in a manner best known to himself. His manner is his secret, not necessarily a jealous one. He cannot disclose it as a general thing; if he would, he would be at a loss to teach it to others. I say this with a due recollection of having insisted on the community of method of the artist who paints a picture and the artist who writes a novel. The painter is able to teach the rudiments of his practice, and it is possible from the study of good work (granted the aptitude), both to learn how to paint and to learn how to write. Yet it remains true, without injury to the *rapprochement*, that the literary artist would be obliged to say to his pupil much more than the other, 'Ah, well, you must do it as you can!' It is a question of degree, a matter of delicacy. If there are exact sciences, there are also exact arts, and the grammar of painting is so much more definite that it makes the difference.

I ought to add, however, that if Mr. Besant says at the beginning of his essay that the laws of fiction may be laid down and taught with as much precision and exactness as the laws of harmony, perspective, and proportion, he mitigates what might appear to be an extravagance by applying his remark to general laws, and by expressing most of these rules in a manner with which it would certainly be unaccommodating to disagree. That the novelist must write from his experience, that his characters must be real and such as might be met with in actual life, that a young lady brought up in a quiet country village should avoid descriptions of garrison life, and a writer whose friends and personal experiences belong to the lower middle class should carefully

avoid introducing his characters into society that one should enter one's notes in a common place book that one's figures should be clear in outline that making them clear by some trick of speech or of carriage is a bad method and describing them at length is a worse one that English Fiction should have a conscious moral purpose that it is almost impossible to estimate too highly the value of careful workmanship—that is of style that the most important point of all is the story that the story is everything these are principles with most of which it is surely impossible not to sympathize That remark about the lower middle class writer and his knowing his place is perhaps rather chilling but for the rest I should find it difficult to dissent from any one of these recommendations At the same time I should find it difficult positively to assent to them with the exception perhaps of the injunction as to entering one's notes in a common-place book They scarcely seem to me to have the quality that Mr Besant attributes to the rules of the novelist—the precision and exactness of the laws of harmony perspective, and proportion They are suggestive they are even inspiring but they are not exact though they are doubtless as much so as the case admits of which is a proof of that liberty of interpretation for which I just contended For the value of these different injunctions—so beautiful and so vague—is wholly in the meaning one attaches to them The characters the situation which strike one as real will be those that touch and interest one most but the measure of reality is very difficult to fix The reality of Don Quixote or of Mr Micawber is a very delicate shade it is a reality so coloured by the author's vision that, vivid as it may be, one would hesitate to propose it as a model one would expose one's self to some very embarrassing questions on the part of a pupil It goes without saying that you will not write a good novel unless you possess the sense of reality but it will be difficult to give you a recipe for calling that sense into being Humanity is immense and reality has a myriad forms the most one can affirm is that some of the flowers of fiction have the odour of it and others have not as for telling you in advance how your nosegay should be composed that is another affair It is equally excellent and inconclusive to say that one must write from experience to our supposititious aspirant such a declaration might savour of mockery What kind of experience is intended and where does it begin and end? Experience is never limited and it is never complete it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness and catching every air borne particle in its tissue It is the very atmosphere of the mind and when the mind is imaginative—much more when it happens to be that

of a man of genius—it takes to itself the faintest hints of life it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations The young lady living in a village has only to be a damsel upon whom nothing is lost to make it quite unfun (as it seems to me) to declare to her that she shall have nothing to say about the military Greater miracles have been seen than that imagination assisting she should speak the truth about some of these gentlemen I remember an English novelist a woman of genius telling me that she was much commended for the impression she had managed to give in one of her tales of the nature and way of life of the French Protestant youth She had been asked where she learned so much about this recondite being she had been congratulated on her peculiar opportunities These opportunities consisted in her having once, in Paris, as she ascended a staircase passed an open door where in the household of a *pasteur* some of the young Protestants were seated at table round a finished meal The glimpse made a picture it lasted only a moment but that moment was experience She had got her direct personal impression and she turned out her type She knew what youth was and what Protestantism she also had the advantage of having seen what it was to be French so that she converted these ideas into a concrete image and produced a reality Above all however she was blessed with the faculty which when you give it an inch takes an ell, and which for the artist is a much greater source of strength than any accident of residence or of place in the social scale The power to guess the unseen from the seen to trace the implication of things to judge the whole piece by the pattern the condition of feeling life in general so completely that you are well on your way to knowing any particular corner of it—this cluster of gifts may almost be said to constitute experience, and they occur in country and in town and in the most differing stages of education If experience consists of impressions, it may be said that impressions *are* experience just as (have we not seen it?) they are the very air we breathe Therefore if I should certainly say to a novice Write from experience and experience only, I should feel that this was rather a tantalizing monition if I were not careful immediately to add Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost!

I am far from intending by this to minimize the importance of exactness—of truth of detail One can speak best from one's own taste, and I may therefore venture to say that the air of reality (solidity of specification) seems to me to be the supreme virtue of a novel—the merit on which all its other merits (including that conscious moral purpose of which Mr Besant speaks) helplessly and submissively depend If it be not there they are all as nothing and if these be there they owe their effect to the suc



cess with which the author has produced the illusion of life. The cultivation of this success, the study of this exquisite process form to my taste the beginning and the end of the art of the novelist. They are his inspiration, his despair, his reward, his torment, his delight. It is here in very truth that he competes with life: it is here that he competes with his brother the painter in his attempt to render the look of things, the look that conveys their meaning, to catch the colour, the relief, the expression, the surface, the substance of the human spectacle. It is in regard to this that Mr. Besant is well inspired when he bids him take notes. He cannot possibly take too many, he cannot possibly take enough. All life solicits him, and to render the simplest surface to produce the most momentary illusion is a very complicated business. His case would be easier, and the rule would be more exact, if Mr. Besant had been able to tell him what notes to take. But this, I fear, he can never learn in any manual: it is the business of his life. He has to take a great many in order to select a few; he has to work them up as he can, and even the guides and philosophers who might have most to say to him must leave him alone when it comes to the application of precepts, as we leave the painter in communion with his palette. That his characters must be clear in outline, as Mr. Besant says—he feels that down to his boots—but how he shall make them so is a secret between his good angel and himself. It would be absurdly simple if he could be taught that a great deal of description would make them so, or that on the contrary the absence of description and the cultivation of dialogue, or the absence of dialogue and the multiplication of incident, would rescue him from his difficulties. Nothing, for instance, is more possible than that he be of a turn of mind for which this odd literal opposition of description and dialogue in incident and description has little meaning and light. People often talk of these things as if they had a kind of interecine distinctness, instead of melting into each other at every breath, and being intimately associated parts of one general effort of expression. I cannot imagine composition existing in a series of blocks, nor conceive in any novel worth discussing at all, of a passage of description that is not in its intention narrative, a passage of dialogue that is not in its intention descriptive, a touch of truth of any sort that does not partake of the nature of incident, or an incident that derives its interest from any other source than the general and only source of the success of a work of art—that of being illustrative. A novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like any other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found. I think that in each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts. The critic who over the close texture of a

finished work shall pretend to trace a geography of items will mark some frontiers as artificial. I fear as any that have been known to history. There is an old-fashioned distinction between the novel of character and the novel of incident, which must have cost many a smile to the intending fabulist who was keen about his work. It appears to me as little to the point as the equally celebrated distinction between the novel and the romance—to answer as little to any reality. There are bad novels and good novels, as there are bad pictures and good pictures, but that is the only distinction in which I see any meaning, and I can as little imagine speaking of a novel of character as I can imagine speaking of a picture of character. When one says picture, one says of character; when one says novel, one says of incident, and the terms may be transposed at will. What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is either a picture or a novel that is *not* of character? What else do we seek in it and find in it? It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look out at you in a certain way, or if it be not an incident, I think it will be hard to say what it is. At the same time it is an expression of character. If you say you don't see it (character in *that—allons donc!*) this is exactly what the artist who has reasons of his own for thinking he *does* see it undertakes to show you. When a young man makes up his mind that he has not faith enough after all to enter the church, as he intended, that is an incident, though you may not hurry to the end of the chapter to see whether perhaps he doesn't change once more. I do not say that these are extraordinary or startling incidents. I do not pretend to estimate the degree of interest proceeding from them, for this will depend upon the skill of the painter. It sounds almost puerile to say that some incidents are intrinsically much more important than others, and I need not take this precaution after having professed my sympathy for the major ones in remarking that the only classification of the novel that I can understand is into that which has life and that which has it not.

The novel and the romance, the novel of incident and that of character—these clumsy separations appear to me to have been made by critics and readers for their own convenience, and to help them out of some of their occasional queer predicaments, but to have little reality or interest for the producer, from whose point of view it is of course that we are attempting to consider the art of fiction. The case is the same with another shadowy category which Mr. Besant apparently is disposed to set up—that of the modern English novel, unless indeed it be that in this matter he has fallen into an accidental confusion or standpoints. It is not quite clear whether

he intends the remarks in which he alludes to it to be didactic or historical. It is as difficult to suppose a person intending to write a modern English as to suppose him writing an ancient English novel—that is a label which begs the question. One writes the novel, one paints the picture, of one's language and of one's time, and calling it modern English will not, alas! make the difficult task any easier. No more unfortunately will calling this or that work of one's fellow artist a romance—unless it be of course simply for the pleasantness of the thing—as for instance when Hawthorne gave this heading to his story of *Blithedale*. The French, who have brought the theory of fiction to remarkable completeness, have but one name for the novel and have not attempted smaller things in it that I can see for that. I can think of no obligation to which the romancer would not be held equally with the novelist: the standard of execution is equally high for each. Of course it is of execution that we are talking—that being the only point of a novel that is open to contention. This is perhaps too often lost sight of, only to produce interminable confusions and cross-purposes. We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his *donnée*; our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it. Naturally I do not mean that we are bound to like it or find it interesting; in case we do not, our course is perfectly simple—to let it alone. We may believe that of a certain idea even the most sincere novelist can make nothing at all, and the event may perfectly justify our belief; but the failure will have been a failure to execute, and it is in the execution that the fatal weakness is recorded. If we pretend to respect the artist at all, we must allow him his freedom of choice, in the face, in particular cases, of innumerable presumptions that the choice will not fructify. Art derives a considerable part of its beneficial exercise from flying in the face of presumptions, and some of the most interesting experiments of which it is capable are hidden in the bosom of common things. Gustave Flaubert has written a story about the devotion of a servant girl to a parrot, and the production, highly finished as it is, cannot on the whole be called a success. We are perfectly free to find it flat, but I think it might have been interesting, and I for my part am extremely glad he should have written it: it is a contribution to our knowledge of what can be done—or what cannot. Ivan Turgeneff has written a tale about a deaf and dumb serf and a lap dog, and the thing is touching, loving, a little masterpiece. He struck the note of life where Gustave Flaubert missed it—he flew in the face of a presumption and achieved a victory.

Nothing, of course, will ever take the place of the good old fashion of liking a work of art or not liking it: the most improved criticism will not abolish that primitive, that ultimate test. I mention

this to guard myself from the accusation of intimating that the idea, the subject of a novel or a picture, does not matter. It matters to my sense in the highest degree, and if I might put up a prayer it would be that artists should select none but the richest. Some, as I have already hastened to admit, are much more remunerative than others, and it would be a world happily arranged in which persons intending to treat them should be exempt from confusions and mistakes. This fortunate condition will arrive only I fear on the same day that critics become purged from error. Meanwhile I repeat, we do not judge the artist with fairness unless we say to him,

Oh, I grant you your starting point, because if I did not I should seem to prescribe to you, and heaven forbid I should take that responsibility. If I pretend to tell you what you must not take, you will call upon me to tell you then what you must take, in which case I shall be prettily caught. Moreover, it isn't till I have accepted your data that I can begin to measure you. I have the standard, the pitch, I have no right to tamper with your flute, and then criticize your music. Of course I may not care for your idea at all, I may think it silly, or stale, or unclean, in which case I wash my hands of you altogether. I may content myself with believing that you will not have succeeded in being interesting, but I shall, of course, not attempt to demonstrate it, and you will be as indifferent to me as I am to you. I needn't remind you that there are all sorts of tastes, who can know it better? Some people, for excellent reasons, don't like to read about carpenters; others, for reasons even better, don't like to read about courtesans. Many object to Americans. Others (I believe they are mainly editors and publishers) won't look at Italians. Some readers don't like quiet subjects, others don't like bustling ones. Some enjoy a complete illusion, others the consciousness of large concessions. They choose their novels accordingly, and if they don't care about your idea, they won't *a fortiori* care about your treatment.

So that it comes back very quickly, as I have said, to the liking, in spite of M. Zola, who reasons less powerfully than he represents, and who will not reconcile himself to this absoluteness of taste, thinking that there are certain things that people ought to like, and that they can be made to like. I am quite at a loss to imagine anything (at any rate in this matter of fiction) that people *ought* to like or to dislike. Selection will be sure to take care of itself, for it has a constant motive behind it. That motive is simply experience. As people feel life, so they will feel the art that is most closely related to it. This closeness of relation is what we should never forget in talking of the effort of the novel. Many people speak of it as a factitious, artificial form, a product

of ingenuity the business of which is to alter and arrange the things that surround us to translate them into conventional traditional moulds. This however is a view of the matter which carries us but a very short way: condemns the art to an eternal repetition of a few familiar *cliches* cuts short its development and leads us straight up to a dead wall. Catching the very note and trick the strange irregular rhythm of life that is the attempt whose strenuous force keeps Fiction upon her feet. In proportion as in what she offers us we see life *without* rearrangement do we feel that we are touching the truth in proportion as we see it *with* rearrangement do we feel that we are being put off with a substitute a compromise and convention. It is not uncommon to hear an extraordinary assurance of remark in regard to this matter of rearranging which is often spoken of as if it were the last word of art. Mr Besant seems to me in danger of falling into the great error with his rather unguarded talk about selection. Art is essentially selection but it is a selection whose main care is to be typical to be inclusive. For many people art means rose coloured window panes and selection means picking a bouquet for Mrs Grundy. They will tell you glibly that artistic considerations have nothing to do with the disagreeable with the ugly they will rattle off shallow commonplaces about the province of art and the limits of art till you are moved to some wonder in return as to the province and the limits of ignorance. It appears to me that no one can ever have made a seriously artistic attempt without becoming conscious of an immense increase—a kind of revelation—of freedom. One perceives in that case—by the light of a heavenly ray—that the province of art is all life all feeling all observation, all vision. As Mr Besant so justly intimates it is all experience. That is a sufficient answer to those who maintain that it must not touch the sad things of life who stick into its divine unconscious bosom little prohibitory inscriptions on the end of sticks such as we see in public gardens—It is forbidden to walk on the grass it is forbidden to touch the flowers it is not allowed to introduce dogs or to remain after dark it is requested to keep to the right. The young aspirant in the line of fiction whom we continue to imagine will do nothing without taste for in that case his freedom would be of little use to him but the first advantage of his taste will be to reveal to him the absurdity of the little sticks and tickets. If he have taste I must add, of course he will have ingenuity, and my disrespectful reference to that quality just now was not meant to imply that it is useless in fiction. But it is only a secondary aid the first is a capacity for receiving straight impressions.

Mr Besant has some remarks on the question of

the story which I shall not attempt to criticize though they seem to me to contain a singular ambiguity because I do not think I understand them. I cannot see what is meant by talking as if there were a part of a novel which is the story and part of it which for mystical reasons is not—unless indeed the distinction be made in a sense in which it is difficult to suppose that any one should attempt to convey anything. The story, if it represents any thing represents the subject the idea the *donnee* of the novel and there is surely no school—Mr Besant speaks of a school—which urges that a novel should be all treatment and no subject. There must assuredly be something to treat every school is intimately conscious of that. This sense of the story being the idea the starting-point of the novel, is the only one that I see in which it can be spoken of as something different from its organic whole and since in proportion as the work is successful the idea permeates and penetrates it, informs and animates it so that every word and every punctuation-point contribute directly to the expression in that proportion do we lose our sense of the story being a blade which may be drawn more or less out of its sheath. The story and the novel the idea and the form are the needle and thread and I never heard of a guild of tailors who recommended the use of the thread without the needle or the needle without the thread. Mr Besant is not the only critic who may be observed to have spoken as if there were certain things in life which constitute stories and certain others which do not. I find the same odd implication in an entertaining article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* devoted as it happens to Mr Besant's lecture. The story is the thing! says this graceful writer as if with a tone of opposition to some other idea. I should think it was as every painter who as the time for sending in his picture looms in the distance finds himself still in quest of a subject—as every belated artist not fixed about his theme will heartily agree. There are some subjects which speak to us and others which do not but he would be a clever man who should undertake to give a rule—an *index expurgatorius*—by which the story and the no story should be known apart. It is impossible (to me at least) to imagine any such rule which shall not be altogether arbitrary. The writer in the *Pall Mall* opposes the delightful (as I suppose) novel of *Margot la Balafree* to certain tales in which Bostonian nymphs appear to have rejected English dukes for psychological reasons. I am not acquainted with the romance just designated and can scarcely forgive the *Pall Mall* critic for not mentioning the name of the author, but the title appears to refer to a lady who may have received a scar in some heroic adventure. I am inconsolable at not being acquainted with this episode but am utterly at a loss to see

why it is a story when the rejection (or acceptance) of a duke is not and why a reason psychological or other is not a subject when a catarrh is. They are all particles of the multitudinous life with which the novel deals and surely no dogma which pretends to make it lawful to touch the one and unlawful to touch the other will stand for a moment on its feet. It is the special picture that must stand or fall according as it seem to possess truth or to lack it. Mr Besant does not, to my sense, light up the subject by intimating that a story must, under penalty of not being a story, consist of adventures. Why of adventures more than of green spectacles? He mentions a category of impossible things and among them he places fiction without adventure. Why without adventure, more than without matrimony, or celibacy, or parturition or cholera or hydropathy or Jansenism? This seems to me to bring the novel back to the hapless little *role* of being an artificial ingenious thing—bring it down from its large free character of an immense and exquisite correspondence with life. And what is adventure, when it comes to that and by what sign is the listening pupil to recognize it? It is an adventure—an immense one—for me to write this little article and for a Bostonian nymph to reject an English duke is an adventure only less stirring. I should say then for an English duke to be rejected by a Bostonian nymph. I see dramas within dramas in that and innumerable points of view. A psychological reason is, to my imagination, an object adorably pictorial to catch the tint of its complexion—I feel as if that idea might inspire one to Titianesque efforts. There are few things more exciting to me in short than a psychological reason and yet I protest the novel seems to me the most magnificent form of art. I have just been reading at the same time the delightful story of *Treasure Island* by Mr Robert Louis Stevenson and in a manner less consecutive the last tale from M Edmond de Goncourt which is entitled *Cherie*. One of these works treats of murders, mysteries, islands of dreadful renown, hair-breadth escapes, miraculous coincidences and buried doubloons. The other treats of a little French girl who lived in a fine house in Paris and died of wounded sensibility because no one would marry her. I call *Treasure Island* delightful, because it appears to me to have succeeded wonderfully in what it attempts and I venture to bestow no epithet upon *Cherie* which strikes me as having failed deplorably in what it attempts—that is in tracing the development of the moral consciousness of a child. But one of these productions strikes me as exactly as much of a novel as the other and as having a story quite as much. The moral consciousness of a child is as much a part of life as the islands of the Spanish Main and

the one sort of geography seems to me to have those surprises of which Mr Besant speaks quite as much as the other. For myself (since it comes back in the last resort as I say to the preference of the individual), the picture of the child's experience has the advantage that I can at successive steps (an immense luxury near to the sensual pleasure of which Mr Besant's critic in the *Pall Mall* speaks) say Yes or No as it may be to what the artist puts before me. I have been a child in fact, but I have been on a quest for a buried treasure only in supposition and it is a simple accident that with M de Goncourt I should have for the most part to say No. With George Eliot when she painted that country with a far other intelligence I always said Yes.

The most interesting part of Mr Besant's lecture is unfortunately the briefest passage—his very curious allusion to the conscious moral purpose of the novel. Here again it is not very clear whether he be recording a fact or laying down a principle. It is a great pity that in the latter case he should not have developed his idea. This branch of the subject is of immense importance and Mr Besant's few words point to considerations of the widest reach not to be lightly disposed of. He will have treated the art of fiction but superficially who is not prepared to go every inch of the way that these considerations will carry him. It is for this reason that at the beginning of these remarks I was careful to notify the reader that my reflections on so large a theme have no pretension to be exhaustive. Like Mr Besant I have left the question of the morality of the novel till the last and at the last I find I have used up my space. It is a question surrounded with difficulties, as witness the very first that meets us in the form of a definite question on the thiest old Vagueness in such a discussion is fatal and what is the meaning of your morality and your conscious moral purpose? Will you not define your terms and explain how (a novel being a picture) a picture can be either moral or immoral? You wish to paint a moral picture or carve a moral statue will you not tell us how you would set about it? We are discussing the Art of Fiction questions of art are questions (in the widest sense) of execution questions of morality are quite another affair and will you not let us see how it is that you find it so easy to mix them up? These things are so clear to Mr Besant that he has deduced from them a law which he sees embodied in English Fiction, and which is a truly admirable thing and a great cause for congratulation. It is a great cause for congratulation indeed when such thorny problems become as smooth as silk. I may add that in so far as Mr Besant perceives that in point of fact English Fiction has addressed itself preponderantly to these delicate

questions he will appear to many people to have made a vain discovery. They will have been positively struck on the contrary with the moral timidity of the usual English novelist with his (or with her) aversion to face the difficulties with which on every side the treatment of reality bristles. He is apt to be extremely shy (whereas the picture that Mr. Besant draws is a picture of boldness) and the sign of his work, for the most part is a cautious silence on certain subjects. In the English novel (by which of course I mean the American as well) more than in any other there is a traditional difference between that which people know and that which they agree to admit that they know, that which they see and that which they speak of, that which they feel to be a part of life and that which they allow to enter into literature. There is the great difference, in short, between what they talk of in conversation and what they talk of in print. The essence of moral energy is to survey the whole field and I should directly reverse Mr. Besant's remark and say not that the English novel has a purpose but that it has a diffidence. To what degree a purpose in a work of art is a source of corruption I shall not attempt to inquire: the one that seems to me least dangerous is the purpose of making a perfect work. As for our novel I may say lastly on this score that as we find it in England to day it strikes me as addressed in a large degree to young people and that this in itself constitutes a presumption that it will be rather shy. There are certain things which it is generally agreed not to discuss, not even to mention before young people. That is very well but the absence of discussion is not a symptom of the moral passion. The purpose of the English novel—a truly admirable thing and a great cause for congratulation—strikes me therefore as rather negative.

There is one point at which the moral sense and the artistic sense lie very near together: that is in the light of the very obvious truth that the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer. In proportion as that intelligence is fine will the novel, the picture, the statue partake of the substance of beauty and truth. To be constituted of such elements is to my vision, to have purpose enough. No good novel will ever proceed from a superficial mind: that seems to me an axiom which for the artist in fiction will cover all needful moral ground. If the youthful aspirant take it to heart it will illuminate for him many of the mysteries of purpose. There are many other useful things that might be said to him but I have come to the end of my article and can only touch them as I pass. The critic in the *Pall Mall Gazette* whom I have already quoted draws attention to the danger, in speaking of the art of fiction, of generalizing. The danger that he has in mind is rather I

imagine that of particularizing for there are some comprehensive remarks which in addition to those embodied in Mr. Besant's suggestive lecture might without fear of misleading him be addressed to the ingenuous student. I should remind him first of the magnificence of the form that is open to him which offers to sight so few restrictions and such innumerable opportunities. The other arts in comparison appear confined and hampered: the various conditions under which they are exercised are so rigid and definite. But the only condition that I can think of attaching to the composition of the novel is as I have already said that it be sincere. This freedom is a splendid privilege and the first lesson of the young novelist is to learn to be worthy of it.

Enjoy it as it deserves [I should say to him] take possession of it, explore it to its utmost extent, publish it, rejoice in it. All life belongs to you and do not listen either to those who would shut you up into corners of it and tell you that it is only here and there that art inhabits or to those who would persuade you that this heavenly messenger wings her way outside of life altogether breathing a superfine air and turning away her head from the truth of things. There is no impression of life, no manner of seeing it and feeling it to which the plan of the novelist may not offer a place: you have only to remember that talents so dissimilar as those of Alexandre Dumas and Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and Gustave Flaubert have worked in this field with equal glory. Do not think too much about optimism and pessimism: try and catch the colour of life itself. In France to day we see a prodigious effort (that of Émile Zola to whose solid and serious work no explorer of the capacity of the novel can allude without respect) we see an extraordinary effort vitiated by a spirit of pessimism on a narrow basis. Mr. Zola is magnificent but he strikes an English reader as ignorant: he has an air of working in the dark. If he had as much light as energy his results would be of the highest value. As for the aberrations of a shallow optimism, the ground (of English fiction especially) is strewn with these brittle particles as with broken glass. If you must indulge in conclusions let them have the taste of a wide knowledge. Remember that your first duty is to be as complete as possible—to make as perfect a work. Be generous and delicate and pursue the prize.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What does Henry James mean when he refers to the novel as 'history'?
2. Many writers believe that they must write from their own direct experiences. What is James's view of the relationship of experience to writing?

3 James says that in his view criticism of a novel may not be directed to its subject but only to the way in which its subject has been treated. Comment upon this point of view and give arguments for and against it.

4 Write a short statement in which you apply James's critical criteria to any one of the novels studied or contained in this text.

5 How do James's views of the art of fiction compare with those held by modern writers of fiction?



## TEXTS

# Billy Budd, Foretopman

*Herman Melville*

The work of Herman Melville has been attracting increasing attention during the past decade although the bulk of it was published almost one hundred years ago. The reason for the growing interest in Melville is perhaps that the problems with which his work is primarily concerned are more meaningful to our own time than they were to the mid nineteenth century when faith in an expanding society which would go forward to utopia on the strength of free enterprise and science created a preoccupation with material rather than moral affairs. It is as if Melville lived too soon to be properly understood by his contemporaries and certainly his very modest success as a writer is proof enough that he was not fully appreciated during his lifetime.

Melville died in 1891 but it was over twenty five years later that the manuscript of *Billy Budd* was discovered in an old family trunk. The pages were badly scrawled there were different drafts versions and corrections and careful and considered scholarship and assiduity were necessary to piece together the novel that we now have. It is not only an important novel in its own right it has a special significance as the last work that Melville produced which he evidently wrote with little thought of publication and probably as a sort of final testament of his mature beliefs.

The story of *Billy Budd* is essentially a simple one. Billy a young and handsome sailor is accused by Claggart of a crime of which he is completely innocent. When Billy and Claggart come before Captain Vere Billy becomes so incensed at the baseness of Claggart's charge that he strikes him in anger and causes his death. Billy is arrested for murder condemned to death and ultimately executed at the yardarm.

Melville, however is careful to point out that the

story is one of a clash between good and evil represented respectively by Billy Budd and Claggart. Billy is innocent pure happy and filled with an innate love for humanity. Claggart is described by Melville as representative of evil incarnate a man possessed by the Devil and motivated darkly by the forces of wickedness. He detests Billy for no apparent reason and in his capacity as petty officer constantly harasses him in the daily routine of the ship. His accusation against Billy is the culmination of a series of incidents in which Claggart's dislike of the young sailor is manifest a dislike which is incomprehensible in normal terms unless one accepts Melville's thesis that Claggart is innately wicked. It is important to realize that in no way does Billy offend unless it be by his very goodness. Claggart's act is not motivated by even the semblance of a reasonable anger and in his innocence Billy does not believe it necessary to take the simple steps of self preservation which are suggested to him by old Dansker by whom the forthcoming tragedy is suspected and feared.

Billy then falsely accused is unable to express himself because of a slight speech impediment and because in his innocent mind the very monstrosity of Claggart is incomprehensible he strikes out in sudden anger not to kill Claggart but almost as a gesture of self defense the reflex action of a man overcome by the iniquity of what is happening to him. Although Billy has no intention of killing Claggart his blow does in fact prove fatal and Billy is placed under arrest.

It is in this situation of course that the problem of the story resides. The emphasis shifts to Captain Vere who as captain of the ship is the sole arbiter of justice in the microcosmic world which he commands. His problem is one of morality and justice on the one hand a young man innocent and good provoked certainly by baseness without any murderous intent has—through the operation of a set of circumstances over which he had virtually no control—killed another man. If ever there were a case of justifiable homicide Budd's crime is certainly such. On the other hand it is unquestioned that Budd has killed Claggart one man has murdered another and this is sinful regardless of the circumstances. First of all it is the very nature of divine law that it be a permanent injunction of God to man not one which may be applied here and overlooked there or obeyed according to caprice. Second as both arbiter of abstract justice and of order in the ship Vere recognizes that to

permit any crime to go unpunished is to weaken to that extent the rigid discipline and necessary order of the world of the vessel. Vere's dilemma is that of the human being terribly and agonizingly sympathetic to the position of the sinner Budd who must nonetheless affirm the divine law by executing him in the trust that God from whom the moral law comes initially alone can decide whether commutation is justified. Man says Melville cannot do more in his capacity as man than to administer as best he can the laws of God even when those laws seem to operate with cruel injustice. Any other course is to question the divine law for divine law can be altered only by God and not by man.

Thus Melville has succeeded in writing what is in essence a perfect tragedy. Budd is the tragic hero who falls afoul of a set of circumstances which he did not cause but which he cannot by the same token battle. Like Oedipus, Budd must suffer for the commission of a crime he did not intend to commit and which was moreover forced upon him. And like Oedipus, Billy Budd recognizes at the end the justice of Vere's decision and calls out before his death: "God bless you, Captain Vere, for without this understanding on Budd's part the tragedy would have no more meaning than if Othello had died without discovering that Desdemona was in fact innocent of adultery with Cassio." Thus the moral order as in Greek tragedy is questioned as the human being is pulled toward acquitting Billy Budd and then in Vere's decision it is again reaffirmed and strengthened as we know that divine law still prevails on earth and that everything is in its proper place. It is a harsh and difficult acceptance that we must make, one that goes against every fiber of our human feeling, but it is of the very nature of the problem that this should be the way it is.

In the light of the defiance which Ahab hurled against the fates in *Moby Dick* and the strong power of many of Melville's earlier protests against injustice in the world, it is significant that here in his final statement he should have come at last to a sort of resignation and acceptance of the way of the world. The analogies to the crucifixion of Christ are obvious in the final scenes as Budd rises on the end of the rope and hangs still. The seamen take pieces of the yardarm as relics and the legend of Billy passes into history precisely because he does not die in vain but in what Professor Wallace Moffett in his excellent article on the novel calls a touching affirmation of faith in the persistence of good, manly comradeship, gentleness allied to strength, ethical probity both unlettered and schooled, and a conviction that what good men do—and are—is not always interred with their bones.

Dedicated to  
Jack Chace  
*Englishman*

*Wherever that great heart may now be  
Here on earth or harbored in Paradise Cap-  
tain of the main top in the year 1843 in  
the U S Frigate United States*

#### PREFACE

The year 1797, the year of this narrative, belongs to a period which as every thinker now feels involved a crisis for Christendom not exceeded in its undetermined momentousness at the time by any other era whereof there is record. The opening proposition made by the Spirit of that Age involved the rectification of the Old World's hereditary wrongs. In France to some extent this was bloodily effected. But what then? Straightway the Revolution itself became a wrongdoer, one more oppressive than the kings. Under Napoleon it enthroned upstart Kings and initiated that prolonged agony of continual war whose final throes was Waterloo. During those years not the wisest could have foreseen that the outcome of all would be what to some thinkers apparently it has since turned out to be, a political advance along nearly the whole line for Europeans.

Now as elsewhere hinted, it was something caught from the Revolutionary Spirit that at Spithead emboldened the men of war's men to rise against real abuses long standing ones, and afterwards at the Nore to make inordinate and aggressive demands, successful resistance to which was confirmed only when the ringleaders were hung for an admonitory spectacle to the anchored fleet. Yet in a way analogous to the operation of the Revolution at large, the Great Mutiny, though by Englishmen, naturally deemed monstrous at the time, doubtless gave the first latent prompting to most important reforms in the British Navy.

#### BILLY BUDD

#### SAILOR

(An inside narrative)\*

#### 1

IN THE time before steamships or then more frequently than now, a stroller along the docks of any considerable sea port would occasionally have his attention arrested by a group of bronzed mariners, man-of-war's men or merchant sailors in holiday attire ashore on liberty. In certain instances they would flank, or, like a body guard, quite surround some superior figure of their own class moving

\* [Where inconsistencies in capitalization, spelling, and usage appear, they conform for the most part to the original manuscript.—Editors]



along with them like Aldebaran among the lesser lights of his constellation. That signal object was the Handsome Sailor of the less pious time alike of the military and merchant navies. With no perceptible trace of the vainglorious about him, rather with the off-hand unaffectedness of natural regality, he seemed to accept the spontaneous homage of his shipmates. A somewhat remarkable instance recurs to me. In Liverpool now half a century ago I saw under the shadow of the great dingy street wall of Prince's Dock (an obstruction long since removed) a common sailor so intensely black that he must needs have been a native African of the unadulterate blood of Ham. A symmetric figure much above the average height. The two ends of a gay silk handkerchief thrown loose about the neck danced upon the displayed ebony of his chest. In his ears were big hoops of gold and a Scotch Highland bonnet with a tartan band set off his shapely head.

It was a hot noon in July and his face lustrous with perspiration beamed with barbaric good humor. In jovial sallies right and left his white teeth flashing into view he lollicked along the centre of a company of his shipmates. These were made up of such an assortment of tribes and complexions as would have well fitted them to be marched up by Anacharsis Cloots before the bar of the first French Assembly as Representatives of the Human Race. At each spontaneous tribute rendered by the wayfarers to this black pagod of a fellow—the tribute of a pause and stare, and less frequent an exclamation—the motley retinue showed that they took that sort of pride in the evoker of it which the Assyrian priests doubtless showed for their grand sculptured Bull when the faithful prostrated themselves.

To return

If in some cases a bit of a nautical Murat in setting forth his person ashore the handsome sailor of the period in question evinced nothing of the dandified Billy be Dym, an amusing character all but extinct now but occasionally to be encountered and in a form yet more amusing than the original at the tiller of the boats on the tempestuous Erie Canal or more likely vamping in the grogeries along the tow path. Invariably a proficient in his perilous calling, he was also more or less of a mighty boxer or wrestler. It was strength and beauty. Tales of his prowess were recited. Ashore he was the champion afloat the spokesman on every suitable occasion always foremost. Close reefing top sails in a gale, there he was astride the weather-ward arm and foot in the Flemish horse as stirrup both hands tugging at the earring as at a bridle in very much the attitude of young Alexander curb ing the fiery Bucephalus. A superb figure tossed up

as by the horns of Taurus against the thunderous sky cheerily hallooing to the strenuous file along the spar.

The moral nature was seldom out of keeping with the physical make. Indeed except as toned by the former the comeliness and power always attractive in masculine conjunction hardly could have drawn the sort of honest homage the Handsome Sailor in some examples received from his less gifted associates.

Such a cynosure, at least in aspect and something such too in nature though with important variations made apparent as the story proceeds was welk-eyed Billy Budd or Baby Budd as more familiarly under circumstances hereafter to be given he at last came to be called aged twenty-one a foretopman of the British fleet toward the close of the last decade of the eighteenth century. It was not very long prior to the time of the narration that follows that he had entered the King's Service having been impressed on the Narrow Seas from a homeward-bound English merchantman into a seventy-four outward-bound H.M.S. *Indomitable* which ship as was not unusual in those hurried days having been obliged to put to sea short of her proper complement of men. Plump upon Billy at first sight in the gangway the boarding officer Lieutenant Ratcliffe pounced even before the merchantman's crew was formally mustered on the quarter deck for his deliberate inspection. And him only he elected. For whether it was because the other men who ranged before him showed to ill advantage after Billy or whether he had some scruples in view of the merchantman being rather short-handed however it might be the officer contented himself with his first spontaneous choice. To the surprise of the ship's company though much to the Lieutenant's satisfaction Billy made no demur. But indeed any demur would have been as idle as the protest of a gold finch popped into a cage.

Noting this uncomplaining acquiescence all but cheerful one might say, the shipmates turned a surprised glance of silent reproach at the sailor. The shipmaster was one of those worthy mortals found in every vocation even the humbler ones—the sort of person whom everybody agrees in calling a respectable man. And—nor so strange to report as it may appear to be—though a ploughman of the troubled waters life long contending with the intractable elements there was nothing this honest soul at heart loved better than simple peace and quiet. For the rest he was fifty or thereabouts a little inclined to corpulence and prepossessing face unwhiskered and of an agreeable color—a rather full face, humanely intelligent in expression. On a fair day with a fair wind and all going well a certain musical chime in his voice seemed to be the veritable

unobstructed outcome of the innermost man. He had much prudence, much conscientiousness, and there were occasions when these virtues were the cause of overmuch disquietude in him. On a passage so long as his craft was in any proximity to land, no sleep for Captain Graveling. He took to heart those serious responsibilities not so heavily borne by some shipmasters.

Now while Billy Budd was down in the fore-castle getting his kit together, the *Indomitable's* lieutenant, burly and bluff, nowise disconcerted by Captain Graveling's omitting to proffer the customary hospitalities on an occasion so unwelcome to him, an omission simply caused by preoccupation of thought, unceremoniously invited himself into the cabin and also to a flask from the spirit locker, a receptacle which his experienced eye instantly discovered. In fact he was one of those sea dogs in whom all the hardship and peril of naval life in the great prolonged wars of his time never impaired the natural instinct for sensuous enjoyment. His duty he always faithfully did, but duty is sometimes a dry obligation, and he was for irrigating its aridity whensoever possible with a fertilizing decoction of strong waters. For the cabin's proprietor there was nothing left but to play the part of the enforced host with what ever grace and alacrity were practicable. As necessary adjuncts to the flask, he silently placed tumbler and water-jug before the irrepressible guest. But excusing himself from partaking just then, he dismally watched the unembarrassed officer deliberately diluting his grog a little, then tossing it off in three swallows, pushing the empty tumbler away yet not so far as to be beyond easy reach at the same time settling himself in his seat and smacking his lips with high satisfaction, looking straight at the host.

These proceedings over, the Master broke the silence, and there lurked a rueful reproach in the tone of his voice. Lieutenant, you are going to take my best man from me, the jewel of 'em.

Yes, I know, rejoined the other, immediately drawing back the tumbler preliminary to a replenishing. Yes, I know. Sorry.

Beg pardon, but you don't understand, Lieutenant. See here now. Before I shipped that young fellow, my fore-castle was a rat-pit of quarrels. It was black times. I tell you, aboard the *Rights* here, I was worried to that degree my pipe had no comfort for me. But Billy came, and it was like a Catholic priest striking peace in an Irish shindy. Not that he preached to them or said or did anything in particular, but a virtue went out of him, sugaring the sour ones. They took to him like hornets to treacle, all but the buffer of the gang, the big shaggy chap with the fire-red whiskers. He indeed out of envy, perhaps, of the newcomer, and thinking such

a sweet and pleasant fellow, as he mockingly designated him to the others, could hardly have the spirit of a game cock must needs bestir himself in trying to get up an ugly row with him. Billy forebore with him and reasoned with him in a pleasant way—he is something like myself, Lieutenant, to whom ought like a quarrel is hateful—but nothing served. So in the second dog-watch one day the Red Whiskers, in presence of the others, under pretence of showing Billy just whence a sirloin steak was cut—for the fellow had once been a butcher—insultingly gave him a dig under the ribs. Quick as lightning Billy let fly his arm. I dare say he never meant to do quite as much as he did, but anyhow he gave the burly fool a terrible drubbing. It took about half a minute, I should think. And lo! bless you, the lubber was astonished at the celerity. And will you believe it, Lieutenant, the Red Whiskers now really loves Billy—loves him, or is the biggest hypocrite that ever I heard of. But they all love him. Some of 'em do his washing, darn his old trousers for him, the carpenter is at odd times making a pretty little chest of drawers for him. Anybody will do anything for Billy Budd, and it's the happy family here. But now, Lieutenant, if that young fellow goes—I know how it will be, aboard the *Rights*. Not again very soon shall I, coming up from dinner, lean over the capstan smoking a quiet pipe—no, not very soon again, I think. Ay, Lieutenant, you are going to take away the jewel of 'em, you are going to take away my peacemaker! And with that the good soul had really some ado in checking a rising sob.

Well, said the officer who had listened with amused interest to all this, and now waxing merry with his tittle. Well, blessed are the peacemakers, especially the fighting peacemakers! And such are the seventy-four beauties, some of which you see poking their noses out at the port-holes of yonder war-ship, lying to for me, pointing through the cabin window of the *Indomitable*. But courage! don't look so downhearted, man. Why, I pledge you in advance the royal approbation. Rest assured that His Majesty will be delighted to know that in a time when his hard tack is not sought for by sailors with such avidity as should be, a time also when some shipmasters privily resent the borrowing from them a tar or two for the service, His Majesty, I say, will be delighted to learn that *one* shipmaster at least cheerfully surrenders to the King the flower of his flock, a sailor who with equal loyalty makes no dissent—But where's my beauty? Ah, looking through the cabin's open door. Here he comes, and by Jove—lugging along his chest—Apollo with his portmanteau!—My man, stepping out to him, you can't take that big box aboard a war-ship. The boxes there are mostly shot-boxes. Put your duds in a bag

lad Boot and saddle for the cavalryman, bag and hammock for the man of war's man

The transfer from chest to bag was made. And, after seeing his man into the cutter and then following him down the lieutenant pushed off from the *Rights of Man*. That was the merchant-ship's name though by her master and crew abbreviated in sailor fashion into *The Rights*. The hard-headed Dundee owner was a staunch admirer of Thomas Paine whose book in rejoinder to Burke's arraignment of the French Revolution had then been published for some time and had gone everywhere. In christening his vessel after the title of Paine's volume the man of Dundee was something like his contemporary shipowner, Stephen Girard of Philadelphia whose sympathies alike with his native land and its liberal philosophers he evinced by naming his ships after Voltaire, Diderot and so forth.

But now when the boat swept under the merchant-man's stern and officer and oarsmen were noting—some bitterly and others with a grin—the name emblazoned there, just then it was that the new recruit jumped up from the bow where the coxswain had directed him to sit and waving his hat to his silent shipmates sorrowfully looking over at him from the taffrail bade the lads a genial good-bye. Then making a salutation as to the ship herself, And good-bye to you too, old *Rights of Man*.

Down Sir! roared the lieutenant instantly as summing all the rigor of his rank though with difficulty repressing a smile.

To be sure Billy's action was a terrible breach of naval decorum. But in that decorum he had never been instructed in consideration of which the lieutenant would hardly have been so energetic in reproof but for the concluding farewell to the ship. This he rather took as meant to convey a covert sally on the new recruit's part, a sly slur at impressment in general and that of himself in especial. And yet more likely if satire it was in effect, it was hardly so by intention, for Billy though happily endowed with the gayety of high health, youth and a free heart was yet by no means of a satirical turn. The will to it and the sinister dexterity were alike wanting. To deal in double meanings and insinuations of any sort was quite foreign to his nature.

As to his enforced enlistment that he seemed to take pretty much as he was wont to take any vicissitude of weather. Like the animals, though no philosopher he was, without knowing it practically a fatalist. And, it may be, that he rather liked this adventurous turn in his affairs which promised an opening into novel scenes and martial excitements.

Aboard the *Indomitable* our merchant sailor was forthwith rated as an able seaman and assigned to the starboard watch of the fore top. He was soon at home in the service, not at all disliked for his un-

pretentious good looks and a sort of genial happy-go-lucky air. No merrier man in his mess in marked contrast to certain other individuals included like himself among the impressed portion of the ship's company, for these when not actively employed were sometimes and more particularly in the last dog-watch when the drawing near of twilight induced every apt to fall into a saddy mood which in some partook of sullenness. But they were not so young as our foretopman and no few of them must have known a hearth of some sort. Others may have had wives and children left too probably in uncertain circumstances and hardly any but must have had acknowledged kith and kin while for Billy as will shortly be seen his entire family was practically invested in himself.

## 2

Though our new-made foretopman was well received in the top and on the gun-decks hardly here was he that cynosure he had previously been among those minor ship's companies of the merchant marine with which companies only had he hitherto con-sorted.

He was young and despite his all but fully developed frame in aspect looked even younger than he really was owing to a lingering adolescent expression in the as yet smooth face all but feminine in purity of natural complexion but where thanks to his sea-going the lily was quite suppressed and the rose had some ado visibly to flush through the tan.

To one essentially such a novice in the complexities of factitious life the abrupt transition from his former and simpler sphere to the ampler and more knowing world of a great war ship this might well have abashed him had there been any conceit or vanity in his composition. Among her miscellaneous multitude the *Indomitable* mustered several individuals who however inferior in grade were of no common natural stamp sailors more signally susceptible of that air which continuous martial discipline and repeated presence in battle can in some degree impart even to the average man. As the *handsome sailor* Billy Budd's position aboard the seventy-four was something analogous to that of a rustic beauty transplanted from the provinces and brought into competition with the high-born dames of the court. But this change of circumstances he scarce noted. As little did he observe that something about him provoked an ambiguous smile in one or two harder faces among the blue-jackets. Nor less unaware was he of the peculiar favorable effect his person and demeanor had upon the more intelligent gentlemen of the quarter-deck. Nor could this well have been otherwise. Cast in a mould peculiar to the finest physical examples of those Englishmen in whom

the Saxon strain would seem not at all to partake of any Norman or other admixture he showed in face that humane look of reposeful good nature which the Greek sculptor in some instances gave to his heroic strong man Hercules. But this again was subtly modified by another and pervasive quality. The ear small and shapely, the arch of the foot the curve in mouth and nostril even the indurated hand dyed to the orange tawny of the toucan's bill a hand telling alike of the halyards and tar bucket but above all, something in the mobile expression and every chance attitude and movement something suggestive of a mother eminently favored by Love and the Graces all this strangely indicated a lineage in direct contradiction to his lot. The mysteriousness here became less mysterious through a matter of fact elicited when Billy at the capstan was being formally mustered into the service. Asked by the officer a small brisk little gentleman as it chanced among other questions, his place of birth he replied: "Please Sir, I don't know."

"Don't know where you were born?"—Who was your father?

God knows, Sir.

Struck by the straightforward simplicity of these replies the officer next asked: "Do you know anything about your beginning?"

"No, Sir. But I have heard that I was found in a pretty silk-lined basket hanging one morning from the knocker of a good man's door in Bristol."

"Found say you?" Well, throwing back his head and looking up and down the new recruit. Well it turns out to have been a pretty good find. Hope they'll find some more like you, my man, the fleet sadly needs them.

Yes, Billy Budd was a foundling, a presumable bye-blow and, evidently, no ignoble one. Noble descent was as evident in him as in a blood horse.

For the rest, with little or no sharpness of faculty or any trace of the wisdom of the serpent nor yet quite a dove, he possessed that kind and degree of intelligence going along with the unconventional rectitude of a sound human creature, one to whom not yet has been proffered the questionable apple of knowledge. He was illiterate; he could not read, but he could sing, and like the illiterate nightingale was sometimes the composer of his own song.

Of self-consciousness he seemed to have little or none, or about as much as we may reasonably impute to a dog of Saint Bernard's breed.

Habitually living with the elements and knowing little more of the land than as a beach, or, rather, that portion of the terraqueous globe providentially set apart for dance houses, doxies and tapsters, in short what sailors call a fiddlers' green, his simple nature remained unsophisticated by those moral obliquities which are not in every case incompatible

with that manufacturable thing known as respectability. But are sailors frequenters of fiddlers' greens without vices? No, but less often than with landmen do their vices so called partake of crookedness of heart, seeming less to proceed from viciousness than exuberance of vitality after long constraint, frank manifestations in accordance with natural law. By his original constitution aided by the cooperating influences of his lot, Billy in many respects was little more than a sort of upright barbarian, much such perhaps as Adam presumably might have been ere the urbane Serpent wriggled himself into his company.

And here be it submitted that apparently going to corroborate the doctrine of man's fall, a doctrine now popularly ignored, it is observable that where certain virtues, pristine and unadulterate, peculiarly characterize anybody in the external uniform of civilization, they will upon scrutiny seem not to be derived from custom or convention, but rather to be out of keeping with these, as if indeed exceptionally transmitted from a period prior to Cain's city and civilized man. The character marked by such qualities has to an unvitiated taste an untampered-with flavor like that of berries, while the man thoroughly civilized even in a fair specimen of the breed has to the same moral palate a questionable smack as of a compounded wine. To any stray inheritor of these primitive qualities found, like Caspar Hauser wandering dazed in any Christian capital of our time, the good-natured poet's famous invocation, near two thousand years ago, of the good rustic out of his latitude in the Rome of the Cesars, still appropriately holds—

Honest and poor, Faithful in word and thought  
What has thee, Fabian, to the city brought?

Though our Handsome Sailor had as much of masculine beauty as one can expect anywhere to see, nevertheless, like the beautiful woman in one of Hawthorne's minor tales, there was just one thing amiss in him. No visible blemish indeed, as with the lady, no but an occasional liability to a vocal defect. Though in the hour of elemental uproar or peril, he was everything that a sailor should be, yet under sudden provocation of strong heart feeling his voice otherwise singularly musical, as if expressive of the harmony within, was apt to develop an organic hesitancy, in fact more or less of a stutter or even worse. In this particular Billy was a striking instance that the arch interferer, the envious marplot of Eden, still has more or less to do with every human consignment to this planet of earth. In every case, one way or another, he is sure to slip in his little card, as much as to remind us—I too have a hand here.

The avowal of such an imperfection in the Hand-

some Sailor should be evidence not alone that he is not presented as a conventional hero but also that the story in which he is the main figure is no romance

## 3

At the time of Billy Budd's arbitrary enlistment into the *Indomitable* that ship was on her way to join the Mediterranean fleet. No long time elapsed before the junction was effected. As one of that fleet the seventy-four participated in its movements, though at times on account of her superior sailing qualities in the absence of frigates despatched on separate duty as a scout and at times on less temporary service. But with all this the story has little concernment restricted as it is to the inner life of one particular ship and the career of an individual sailor.

It was the summer of 1797. In the April of that year had occurred the commotion at Spithead followed in May by a second and yet more serious outbreak in the fleet at the Nore. The latter is known and without exaggeration in the epithet as the Great Mutiny. It was indeed a demonstration more menacing to England than the contemporary manifestoes and conquering and proselyting armies of the French Directory.

To the British Empire the Nore Mutiny was what a strike in the fire-brigade would be to London threatened by general arson. In a crisis when the kingdom might well have anticipated the famous signal that some years later published along the naval line of battle what it was that upon occasion England expected of Englishmen—that was the time when at the mast-heads of the three-deckers and seventy-fours moored in her own roadstead—a fleet the right arm of a Power then all but the sole free conservative one of the Old World—the blue-jackets to be numbered by thousands ran up with huzzas the British colours with the union and cross wiped out by that cancellation transmuting the flag of founded law and freedom defined into the enemy's red meteor of unbridled and unbounded revolt. Reasonable discontent growing out of practical grievances in the fleet had been ignited into irrational combustion as by live cinders blown across the Channel from France in flames.

The event converted into irony for a time those spouted strains of Dibdin—as a song-writer no mean auxiliary to the English Government at the European conjuncture—strains celebrating among other things the patriotic devotion of the British tar.

*And as for my life 'tis the King's!*

Such an episode in the Islands' grand naval story her naval historians naturally abridge one of them

(G. P. R. James) candidly acknowledging that fame would he pass it over did not imputability forbid fastidiousness. And yet his mention is less a mention than a reference having to do hardly at all with details. Nor are these readily to be found in the libraries. Like some other events in every age being falling states everywhere including America the Great Mutiny was of such character that national pride along with views of policy would fain shade it off into the historical background. Such events can not be ignored but there is a considerate way of historically treating them. If a well-constituted individual refrains from blazoning aught amiss or calamitous in his family a nation in the like circumstance may without reproach be equally discreet.

Though after parleyings between Government and the ringleaders and concessions by the former as to some glaring abuses the first uprising—that at Spithead—with difficulty was put down or matters for the time pacified yet at the Nore the unforeseen renewal of insurrection on a yet larger scale and emphasized in the conferences that ensued by demands deemed by the authorities not only inadmissible but aggressively insolent indicated—if the Red Flag did not sufficiently do so what was the spirit animating the men. Final suppression however there was but only made possible perhaps by the unswerving loyalty of the maine corps a voluntary resumption of loyalty among influential sections of the crews.

To some extent the Nore Mutiny may be regarded as analogous to the distemp'ring eruption of contagious fever in a frame constitutionally sound and which anon throws it off.

At all events of these thousands of mutineers were some of the tars who not so very long afterwards—whether wholly prompted thereto by patriotism or pugnacious instinct or by both—helped to win a coronet for Nelson at the Nile and the naval crown of crowns for him at Trafalgar. To the mutineers those battles and especially Trafalgar were a plenary absolution and a grand one. For all that goes to make up scenic naval display and heroic magnificence in arms those battles especially Trafalgar stand unmatched in human annals.

## 4

Concerning The greatest sailor since the world began Tennyson?

In this matter of writing resolve as one may to keep to the main road some by-paths have an enticement not readily to be withstood. I am going to err into such a by-path. If the reader will keep me company I shall be glad. At the least we can promise ourselves that pleasure which is wickedly said to be in

sinning for a literary sin the divergence will be

Very likely it is no new remark that the inventions of our time have at last brought about a change in sea-warfare in degree corresponding to the revolution in all warfare effected by the original introduction from China into Europe of gunpowder. The first European fire arm, a clumsy contrivance, was as is well known, scouted by no few of the knights as a base implement, good enough peradventure for weavers too craven to stand up crossing steel with steel in frank fight. But as ashore knightly valor though shorn of its blazonry did not cease with the knights, neither on the seas though nowadays in encounters there a certain kind of displayed gallantry be fallen out of date as hardly applicable under changed circumstances, did the nobler qualities of such naval magnates as Don John of Austria, Doria, Van Tromp, Jean Bart, the long line of British Admirals and the American Decatur of 1812 become obsolete with their wooden walls.

Nevertheless to anybody who can hold the Present at its worth without being inappreciative of the Past it may be forgiven if to such an one the solitary old hulk at Portsmouth, Nelson's *Victory*, seems to float there not alone as the decaying monument of a fame incorruptible, but also as a poetic reproach softened by its picturesqueness to the *Monitors* and yet mightier hulls of the European iron clads. And this not altogether because such craft are unsightly, unavoidably lacking the symmetry and grand lines of the old battle ships, but equally for other reasons.

There are some, perhaps, who while not altogether inaccessible to that poetic reproach just alluded to, may yet on behalf of the new order be disposed to parry it, and this to the extent of iconoclasm if need be. For example, prompted by the sight of the star inserted in the *Victory's* quarter deck designating the spot where the Great Sailor fell, these martial utilitarians may suggest considerations implying that Nelson's ornate publication of his person in battle was not only unnecessary, but not military, navally savored of foolhardiness and vanity. They may add too that at Trafalgar it was in effect nothing less than a challenge to death, and death came, and that but for his bravado the victorious Admiral might possibly have survived the battle, and so instead of having his sagacious dying injunctions overruled by his immediate successor in command, he himself when the contest was decided might have brought his shattered fleet to anchor, a proceeding which might have averted the deplorable loss of life by shipwreck in the elemental tempest that followed the martial one.

Well, should we set aside the more disputable point whether for various reasons it was possible to anchor the fleet then plausibly enough the Benthamites of war may urge the above.

But the *might have been* is but boggy ground to build on. And certainly in foresight as to the larger issue of an encounter and anxious preparations for it—buoying the deadly way and mapping it out as at Copenhagen—few commanders have been so painstakingly circumspect as this same reckless declarer of his person in fight.

Personal prudence even when dictated by quite other than selfish considerations surely is no special virtue in a military man, while an excessive love of glory, impassioned a less burning impulse, the honest sense of duty is the first. If the name *Wellington* is not so much of a trumpet to the blood as the simpler name *Nelson*, the reason for this may perhaps be inferred from the above. Alfred in his funeral ode on the victor of Waterloo ventures not to call him the greatest soldier of all time, though in the same ode he invokes Nelson as the greatest sailor since the world began.

At Trafalgar Nelson on the brink of opening the fight sat down and wrote his last brief will and testament. If under the presentiment of the most magnificent of all victories to be crowned by his own glorious death, a sort of priestly motive led him to dress his person in the jewelled vouchers of his own shining deeds, if thus to have adorned himself for the altar and the sacrifice were indeed vain glory, then affectation and fustian is each more heroic line in the great epics and dramas, since in such lines the poet but embodies in verse those exaltations of sentiment that a nature like Nelson's, the opportunity being given, vitalizes into acts.

## 5

Yes, the outbreak at the Nore was put down. But not every grievance was redressed. If the contractors for example were no longer permitted to ply some practices peculiar to their trade everywhere, such as providing shoddy cloth, rations not sound or false in the measure, not the less impressment for one thing went on. By custom sanctioned for centuries and judicially maintained by a Lord Chancellor as late as Mansfield, that mode of manning the fleet, a mode now fallen into a sort of abeyance but never formally renounced, it was not practicable to give up in those years. Its abrogation would have crippled the indispensable fleet, one wholly under canvas, no steam power, its innumerable sails and thousands of cannon, everything in short worked by muscle alone, a fleet the more insatiable in demand for men, because then multiplying its ships of all grades against contingencies present and to come of the convulsed Continent.

Discontent foreran the Two Mutinies, and more or less it lurkily survived them. Hence it was not unreasonable to apprehend some return of trouble.



sporadic or general. One instance of such apprehensions. In the same year with this story Nelson then Vice Admiral Sir Horatio being with the fleet off the Spanish coast, was directed by the Admiral in command to shift his pennant from the *Captain* to the *Theseus* and for this reason that the latter ship having newly arrived on the station from home where it had taken part in the Great Mutiny danger was apprehended from the temper of the men and it was thought that an officer like Nelson was the one not indeed to terrorize the crew into base subjection, but to win them by force of his mere presence back to an allegiance if not as enthusiastic as his own yet as true. So it was that for a time on more than one quarter deck anxiety did exist. At sea precautionary vigilance was strained against relapse. At short notice an engagement might come on. When it did, the lieutenants assigned to batteries felt it incumbent on them in some instances to stand with drawn swords behind the men working the guns.

## 6

But on board the seventy four in which Billy now swung his hammock very little in the manner of the men and nothing obvious in the demeanor of the officers would have suggested to an ordinary observer that the Great Mutiny was a recent event. In their general bearing and conduct the commissioned officers of a war-ship naturally take their tone from the commander that is if he have that ascendancy of character that ought to be his.

Captain the Honorable Edward Fairfax Vere to give his full title was a bachelor of forty or thereabouts a sailor of distinction even in a time prolific of renowned seamen. Though allied to the higher nobility his advancement had not been altogether owing to influences connected with that circumstance. He had seen much service, been in various engagements always acquitting himself as an officer mindful of the welfare of his men, but never tolerating an infraction of discipline thoroughly versed in the science of his profession, and intrepid to the verge of temerity though never injudiciously so. For his gallantry in the West Indian waters as flag lieutenant under Rodney in that Admiral's crowning victory over De Grasse, he was made a post-captain.

Ashore in the garb of a civilian scarce anyone would have taken him for a sailor more especially that he never garnished unprofessional talk with nautical terms, and grave in his bearing, evinced little appreciation of mere humor. It was not out of keeping with these traits that on a passage when nothing demanded his paramount action he was the most undemonstrative of men. Any landsman observing this gentleman not conspicuous by his stature and wearing no pronounced insignia, emerging from

his cabin retreat to the open deck and noting the silent deference of the officers returning to leeward might have taken him for the King's guest a civilian aboard the King's ship some highly honorable discreet envoy on his way to an important post. But in fact this unobtrusiveness of demeanor may have proceeded from a certain unaffected modesty of manhood sometimes accompanying a resolute nature a modesty evinced at all times not calling for pronounced action and which shown in any rank of life suggests a virtue aristocratic in kind.

As with some others engaged in various departments of the world's more heroic activities Captain Vere though practical enough upon occasion would at times betray a certain dreaminess of mood. Standing alone on the weather side of the quarter deck one hand holding by the rigging he would absently gaze off at the blank sea. At the presentation to him then of some minor matter interrupting the current of his thoughts he would show more or less irascibility but instantly he would control it.

In the navy he was popularly known by the appellation—Starry Vere. How such a designation happened to fall upon one who whatever his sterling qualities was without any brilliant ones was in this wise. A favorite kinsman Lord Denton a free hearted fellow had been the first to meet and congratulate him upon his return to England from his West Indian cruise and but the day previous turning over a copy of Andrew Marvell's poems had lighted not for the first time however upon the lines entitled *Appleton House* the name of one of the seats of their common ancestor a hero in the German wars of the seventeenth century in which poem occur the lines

This tis to have been from the first  
In a domestic heaven nursed  
Under the discipline severe  
Of Fairfax and the starry Vere

And so upon embracing his cousin fresh from Rodney's great victory wherein he had played so gallant a part brimming over with just family pride in the sailor of their house he exuberantly exclaimed

Give ye joy, Ed give ye joy my starry Vere! This got currency and the novel prefix serving in familiar parlance readily to distinguish the *Indomitable's* Captain from another Vere his senior a distant relative an officer of like rank in the navy it remained permanently attached to the surname.

## 7

In view of the part that the commander of the *Indomitable* plays in scenes shortly to follow it may be well to fill out that sketch of him outlined in the previous chapter.



Aside from his qualities as a sea officer Captain Vere was an exceptional character. Unlike no few of England's renowned sailors long and arduous service with signal devotion to it had not resulted in absorbing and *salting* the entire man. He had a marked leaning toward everything intellectual. He loved books never going to sea without a newly replenished library compact but of the best. The isolated leisure in some cases so wearisome falling at intervals to commanders even during a war cruise never was tedious to Captain Vere. With nothing of that literary taste which less heeds the thing conveyed than the vehicle his bias was toward those books to which every serious mind of superior order occupying any active post of authority in the world naturally inclines—books treating of actual men and events no matter of what era—history biography and unconventional writers who free from cant and convention like Montaigne honestly and in the spirit of common sense philosophize upon realities.

In this love of reading he found confirmation of his own more reserved thoughts—confirmation which he had vainly sought in social converse so that as touching most fundamental topics, there had got to be established in him some positive convictions which he forfeit would abide in him essentially unmodified so long as his intelligent part remained unimpaired. In view of the troubled period in which his lot was cast this was well from him. His settled convictions were as a dyke against those invading waters of novel opinion social political and otherwise which carried away as in a torrent no few minds in those days, minds by nature not inferior to his own. While other members of that aristocracy to which by birth he belonged were incensed at the innovators mainly because their theories were inimical to the privileged classes not alone Captain Vere disinterestedly opposed them because they seemed to him incapable of embodiment in lasting institutions, but at war with the peace of the world and the true welfare of mankind.

With minds less stored than his and less earnest, some officers of his rank with whom at times he would necessarily consort found him lacking in the companionable quality a dry and bookish gentleman as they deemed. Upon any chance with drawal from their company one would be apt to say to another something like this: Vere is a noble fellow, Starry Vere. Spite the gazettes Sir Horatio meaning him with the Lord title is at bottom scarce a better seaman or fighter. But between you and me now don't you think there is a queer streak of the pedantic running through him? Yes like the King's yarn in a coil of navy rope?

Some apparent ground there was for this sort of confidential criticism since not only did the Captain's discourse never fall into the jocosely familiar

but in illustrating of any point touching the stirring personages and events of the time he would be as apt to cite some historic character or incident of antiquity as that he would cite from the moderns. He seemed unmindful of the circumstance that to his bluff company such remote allusions however pertinent they might really be were altogether alien to men whose reading was mainly confined to the journals. But considerateness in such matters is not easy to natures constituted like Captain Vere's. Their honesty prescribes to them directness sometimes far-reaching like that of a migratory fowl that in its flight never heeds when it crosses a frontier.

## 8

The lieutenants and other commissioned gentlemen forming Captain Vere's staff it is not necessary here to particularize nor needs it to make any mention of any of the warrant-officers. But among the petty-officers was one who having much to do with the story may as well be forthwith introduced. His portrait I essay but shall never hit it. This was John Claggart the Master-at-arms. But that sea title may to landsmen seem somewhat equivocal. Originally doubtless that petty officer's function was the instruction of the men in the use of arms sword or cutlass. But very long ago owing to the advance in gunnery making hand-to-hand encounters less frequent and giving to nitre and sulphur the preeminence over steel that function ceased the Master-at-arms of a great war ship becoming a sort of Chief of Police charged among other matters with the duty of preserving order on the populous lower gun decks.

Claggart was a man of about five and thirty somewhat spare and tall yet of no ill figure upon the whole. His hand was too small and shapely to have been accustomed to hard toil. The face was a notable one the features all except the chin cleanly cut as those on a Greek medallion yet the chin, beardless as Tecumseh's had something of strange protuberant heaviness in its make that recalled the pints of the Rev. Dr. Titus Oates the historic deponent with the clerical drawl in the time of Charles II and the fraud of the alleged Popish Plot. It served Claggart in his office that his eye could cast a tutoring glance. His brow was of the sort phrenologically associated with more than average intellect silken jet curls partly clustering over it making a foil to the pallor below, a pallor tinged with a faint shade of amber akin to the hue of time tinted marbles of old. This complexion, singularly contrasting with the red or deeply bronzed visages of the sailors and in part the result of his official seclusion from the sunlight though it was not exactly displeasing nevertheless seemed to hint of something defective or abnormal in the constitution and blood. But his gen-

eral aspect and manner were so suggestive of an education and career incongruous with his naval function that when not actively engaged in it he looked like a man of high quality social and moral, who for reasons of his own was keeping incog. Nothing was known of his former life. It might be that he was an Englishman and yet there lurked a bit of accent in his speech suggesting that possibly he was not such by birth but through naturalization in early childhood. Among certain grizzled sea gossips of the gun decks and fore-castle went a rumor perdue that the master at arms was a *chevalier* who had volunteered into the King's navy by way of compounding for some mysterious swindle whereof he had been arraigned at the King's Bench. The fact that nobody could substantiate this report was, of course nothing against its secret currency. Such a rumor once started on the gun decks in reference to almost anyone below the rank of a commissioned officer would during the period assigned to this narrative have seemed not altogether wanting in credibility to the Harry old wiseacres of a man of war crew. And indeed a man of Claggart's accomplishments without prior nautical experience entering the navy at mature life as he did and necessarily allotted at the start to the lowest grade in it a man too who never made allusion to his previous life ashore these were circumstances which in the dearth of exact knowledge as to his true antecedents opened to the invidious a vague field for unfavorable surmise.

But the sailors' dog watch gossip concerning him derived a vague plausibility from the fact that now for some period the British Navy could so little afford to be squeamish in the matter of keeping up the muster rolls that not only were press gangs notoriously abroad both afloat and ashore but there was little or no secret about another matter namely that the London police were at liberty to capture any able bodied suspect any questionable fellow at large and summarily ship him to the dock yard or fleet. Furthermore, even among voluntary enlistments there were instances where the motive thereto partook neither of patriotic impulse nor yet of a random desire to experience a bit of sea life and martial adventure. Insolvent debtors of minor grade together with the promiscuous lame ducks of morality found in the Navy a convenient and secure refuge. Secure, because once enlisted aboard a King's Ship, they were as much in sanctuary, as the transgressor of the Middle Ages harbouring himself under the shadow of the altar. Such sanctioned irregularities which for obvious reasons the Government would hardly think to parade at the time and which consequently and as affecting the least influential class of mankind have all but dropped into oblivion lend color to something for the truth whereof I do not

vouch and hence have some scruple in stating something I remember having seen in print though the book I can not recall but the same thing was personally communicated to me now more than forty years ago by an old pensioner in a cocked hat with whom I had a most interesting talk on the terrace at Greenwich a Baltimore negro, a Trafalgar man. It was to this effect. In the case of a warship short of hands whose speedy sailing was imperative, the deficient quota in lack of any other way of making it good would be eked out by draughts culled direct from the jails. For reasons previously suggested it would not perhaps be easy at the present day directly to prove or disprove the allegation. But allowed as a verity how significant would it be of England's straits at the time confronted by those wars which like a flight of harpies rose shrieking from the din and dust of the fallen Bastille. That era appears measurably clear to us who look back at it, and but read of it. But to the grandfathers of us gray-beards the more thoughtful of them the genius of it presented an aspect like that of Camoens' Spirit of the Cape an eclipsing menace mysterious and prodigious. Not America was exempt from apprehension. At the height of Napoleon's unexampled conquests there were Americans who had fought at Bunker Hill who looked forward to the possibility that the Atlantic might prove no barrier against the ultimate schemes of this French portentous upstart from the revolutionary chaos who seemed in act of fulfilling judgment prefigured in the Apocalypse.

But the less credence was to be given to the gun deck talk touching Claggart seeing that no man holding his office in a man of war can ever hope to be popular with the crew. Besides in derogatory comments upon anyone against whom they have a grudge or for any reason or no reason mislike sailors are much like landmen they are apt to exaggerate or romance it.

About as much was really known to the *Indomitable's* tars of the master at arms career before entering the service as an astronomer knows about a comet's travels prior to its first observable appearance in the sky. The verdict of the sea quidnuncs has been cited only by way of showing what sort of moral impression the man made upon rude uncultivated natures whose conceptions of human wickedness were necessarily of the narrowest limited to ideas of vulgar rascality—a thief among the swinging hammocks during a night-watch or the man brokers and land sharks of the sea ports.

It was no gossip however, but fact that though as before hinted, Claggart upon his entrance into the navy was, as a novice assigned to the least honorable section of a man of war's crew embracing the drudgery he did not long remain there.

The superior capacity he immediately evinced his constitutional sobriety ingratiating deference to superiors together with a peculiar ferreting genius manifested on a singular occasion all this capped by a certain austere patriotism abruptly advanced him to the position of master at arms

Of this maritime Chief of Police the ship's corporals so called were the immediate subordinates and compliant ones and this as is to be noted in some business departments ashore almost to a degree inconsistent with entire moral volition His place put various converging wires of underground influence under the Chief's control capable when astutely worked through his understrappers of operating to the mysterious discomfort if nothing worse of any of the sea commonalty

## 9

Life in the fore top well agreed with Billy Budd There when not actually engaged on the yards yet higher aloft the topmen who as such had been picked out for youth and activity constituted an aerial club lounging at ease against the smaller stunsails rolled up into cushions spinning yarns like the lazy gods and frequently amused with what was going on in the busy world of the decks below No wonder then that a young fellow of Billy's disposition was well content in such society Giving no cause of offense to anybody he was always alert at a call So in the merchant service it had been with him But now such a punctiliousness in duty was shown that his topmates would sometimes good naturedly laugh at him for it This heightened alacrity had its cause namely the impression made upon him by the first formal gangway-punishment he had ever witnessed which befell the day following his impressment It had been incurred by a little fellow young a novice an after guardsman absent from his assigned post when the ship was being put about a dereliction resulting in a rather serious hitch to that manoeuvre one demanding instantaneous promptitude in letting go and making fast When Billy saw the culprit's naked back under the scouge gidroned with red welts and worse when he marked the dire expression on the liberated man's face as with his woolen shirt flung over him by the executioner he rushed forward from the spot to bury himself in the crowd Billy was horrified He resolved that never through remissness would he make himself liable to such a visitation or do or omit aught that might merit even verbal reproof What then was his surprise and concern when ultimately he found himself getting into petty trouble occasionally about such matters as the stowage of his bag or something amiss in his hammock matters under the police oversight of the ship's corporals of the lower

decks and which brought down on him a vague threat from one of them

So heedful in all things as he was how could this be? He could not understand it and it more than vexed him When he spoke to his young topmates about it they were either lightly incredulous or found something comical in his unconcealed anxiety Is it your bag Billy? said one well, sew yourself up in it bully boy and then you'll be sure to know if anybody meddles with it

Now there was a veteran aboard who because his years began to disqualify him for more active work had been recently assigned duty as main mast man in his watch looking to the gear belayed at the rail roundabout that great spar near the deck At off times the foretopman had picked up some acquaintance with him and now in his trouble it occurred to him that he might be the sort of person to go to for wise counsel He was an old Dansker long anglicized in the service of few words many wrinkles and some honorable scars His wizened face time-tinted and weather stained to the complexion of an antique parchment was here and there peppered blue by the chance explosion of a gun cartridge in action He was an *Agamemnon*-man some two years prior to the time of this story having served under Nelson when but Sir Horatio in that ship immortal in naval memory and which dismantled and in part broken up to her bare ribs is seen a grand skeleton in Haydon's etching As one of a boarding party from the *Agamemnon* he had received a cut slantwise along one temple and cheek leaving a long pale scar like a streak of dawn's light falling athwart the dark visage It was on account of that scar and the affair in which it was known that he had received it as well as from his blue peppered complexion that the Dansker went among the *Indomitable's* crew by the name of Board-her in the smoke

Now the first time that his small weazel eyes happened to light on Billy Budd a certain grim internal merriment set all his ancient wrinkles into antic play Was it that his eccentric unsentimental old sapience primitive in its kind saw or thought it saw something which in contrast with the war ship's environment looked oddly incongruous in the handsome sailor? But after slyly studying him at intervals the old Merlin's equivocal merriment was modified for now when the twain would meet it would start in his face a quizzing sort of look, but it would be but momentary and sometimes replaced by an expression of speculative query as to what might eventually befall a nature like that, dropped into a world not without some man traps and against whose subtleties simple courage lacking experience and address and without any touch of defensive ugliness is of little avail and where such innocence as man is capable of does yet in a moral

emergency not always sharpen the faculties or enlighten the will

However it was the Dansker in his ascetic way rather took to Billy Nor was this only because of a certain philosophic interest in such a character. There was another cause. While the old man's eccentricities sometimes bordering on the ursine, repelled the juniors, Billy undeterred thereby revering him as a salt hero would make advances never passing the old Agamemnon man without a salutation marked by that respect which is seldom lost on the aged however crabbed at times or whatever their station in life.

There was a vein of dry humor or what not in the mastman and whether in freak of patriarchal irony touching Billy's youth and athletic frame or for some other and more recondite reason from the first in addressing him he always substituted Baby for Billy. The Dansker in fact being the originator of the name by which the foretopman eventually became known aboard ship.

Well then, in his mysterious little difficulty going in quest of the wrinkled one, Billy found him off duty in a dog watch rummaging by himself seated on a shot box of the upper gun-deck now and then surveying with a somewhat cynical regard certain of the more swaggering promenaders there. Billy recounted his trouble, again wondering how it all happened. The salt seer attentively listened accompanying the foretopman's recital with queer twitchings of his wrinkles and problematical little sparkles of his small ferret eyes. Making an end of his story the foretopman asked: And now, Dansker, do tell me what you think of it.

The old man shoving up the front of his tarpaulin and deliberately rubbing the long slant scar at the point where it entered the thin hair laconically said,

Baby Budd *Jimmy Legs* (meaning the master-at arms) is down on you.

*Jimmy Legs!* ejaculated Billy his welken eyes expanding: what for? Why he calls me *the sweet and pleasant young fellow* they tell me.

Does he so? grinned the gizzled one then said.

Ay Baby Lad a sweet voice has *Jimmy Legs*.

No not always. But to me he has. I seldom pass him but there comes a pleasant word.

And that's because he's down upon you, Baby Budd.

Such reiteration along with the manner of it, in comprehensible to a novice, disturbed Billy almost as much as the mystery for which he had sought explanation. Something less unpleasingly oracular he tried to extract but the old sea-Chron thinking perhaps that for the nonce he had sufficiently instructed his young Achilles pursed his lips gathered all his wrinkles together and would commit himself to nothing further.

Years, and those experiences which befall certain shrewder men subordinated life long to the will of superiors all this had developed in the Dansker the pithy guarded cynicism that was his leading characteristic.

## 10

The next day an incident served to confirm Billy Budd in his incredulity as to the Dansker's strange summing up of the case submitted. The ship at noon going large before the wind was rolling on her course and he below at dinner and engaged in some sportful talk with the members of his mess chanced in a sudden lurch to spill the entire contents of his soup pan upon the new scrubbed deck. Claggart the Master-at-arms official rattan in hand happened to be passing along the battery in a bay of which the mess was lodged and the greasy liquid streamed just across his path. Stepping over it he was proceeding on his way without comment since the matter was nothing to take notice of under the circumstances when he happened to observe who it was that had done the spilling. His countenance changed. Pausing he was about to ejaculate something hasty at the sailor but checked himself and pointing down to the steaming soup playfully tapped him from behind with his rattan saying in a low musical voice peculiar to him at times: Handsomely done my lad! And handsome is as handsome did it too! And with that passed on. Not noted by Billy as not coming within his view was the involuntary smile, or rather grimace that accompanied Claggart's equivocal words. And it drew down the thin corners of his shapely mouth. But everybody taking his remark as meant for humorous, and at which therefore is coming from a superior they were bound to laugh with counterfeited glee acted accordingly and Billy tickled it may be by the allusion to his being the handsome sailor merrily joined in, then addressing his messmates exclaimed: There now who says that Jimmy Legs is down on me! And who said he was Beauty? demanded one Donald with some surprise. Whereat the foretopman looked a little foolish recalling that it was only one person Boarded in the smoke who had suggested what to him was the smoky idea that this master-at arms was in any peculiar way hostile to him. Meantime that functionary resuming his path must have momentarily worn some expression less guarded than that of the bitter smile and, usurping the face from the heart some distorting expression perhaps for a drummer boy heedlessly frolicking along from the opposite direction and chancing to come into light collision with his person was strangely disconcerted by his aspect. Nor was the impression lessened when the official impulsively giving him a sharp cut with the rattan vehemently exclaimed: Look where you go!

## 11

What was the matter with the master at arms? And be the matter what it might how could it have direct relation to Billy Budd with whom prior to the affair of the spilled soup he had never come into any special contact official or otherwise? What indeed could the trouble have to do with one so little inclined to give offence as the merchant ship's *peace maker* even him who in Claggart's own phrase was the sweet and pleasant young fellow? Yes why should *Jemmy Legs* to borrow the Dansker's expression, be *down* on the Handsome Sailor? But at heart and not for nothing as the late chance encounter may indicate to the discerning, down on him secretly down on him he assuredly was

Now to invent something touching the more private career of Claggart something involving Billy Budd of which something the latter should be wholly ignorant some romantic incident implying that Claggart's knowledge of the young blue jacket began at some period anterior to catching sight of him on board the seventy four—all this not so difficult to do might avail in a way more or less interesting to account for whatever of enigma may appear to lurk in the case. But in fact there was nothing of the sort. And yet the cause necessarily to be assumed as the sole one assignable is in its very realism as much charged with that prime element of Radcliffian romance *the mysterious* as any that the ingenuity of the author of the *Mysteries of Udolpho* could devise. For what can more partake of the mysterious than an antipathy spontaneous and profound such as is evoked in certain exceptional mortals by the mere aspect of some other mortal however harmless he may be? if not called forth by this very harmlessness itself

Now there can exist no irritating juxtaposition of dissimilar personalities comparable to that which is possible aboard a great war ship fully manned and at sea. There every day among all ranks almost every man comes into more or less of contact with almost every other man. Wholly there to avoid even the sight of an aggravating object one must needs give it Jonah's toss or jump overboard himself. Imagine how all this might eventually operate on some peculiar human creature the direct reverse of a saint?

But for the adequate comprehending of Claggart by a normal nature these hints are insufficient. To pass from a normal nature to him one must cross the deadly space between. And this is best done by induction.

Long ago an honest scholar my senior said to me in reference to one who like himself is now no more a man so unimpeachably respectable that against him nothing was ever openly said though among

the few something was whispered, Yes, X—— is a nut not to be cracked by the tap of a lady's fan. You are aware that I am the adherent of no organized religion much less of any philosophy built into a system. Well for all that I think that to try and get into X—— enter his labyrinth and get out again without a clue derived from some source other than what is known as *knowledge of the world*—that were hardly possible at least for me.

Why said I X—— however singular a study to some is yet human and knowledge of the world assuredly implies the knowledge of human nature and in most of its varieties.

Yes but a superficial knowledge of it serving ordinary purposes. But for anything deeper I am not certain whether to know the world and to know human nature be not two distinct branches of knowledge which while they may coexist in the same heart yet either may exist with little or nothing of the other. Nay in an average man of the world his constant rubbing with it blunts that fine spiritual insight indispensable to the understanding of the essential in certain exceptional characters whether evil ones or good. In a matter of some importance I have seen a gul wind an old lawyer about her little finger. Nor was it the dotage of senile love. Nothing of the sort. But he knew law better than he knew the gul's heart. Coke and Blackstone hardly shed so much light into obscure spiritual places as the Hebrew prophets. And who were they? Mostly recluses.

At the time my inexperience was such that I did not quite see the drift of all this. It may be that I see it now. And indeed if that lexicon which is based on Holy Writ were any longer popular one might with less difficulty define and denominate certain phenomenal men. As it is one must turn to some authority not liable to the charge of being tinctured with the Biblical element.

In a list of definitions included in the authentic translation of Plato a list attributed to him occurs this: Natural Depravity a depravity according to nature. A definition which though savoring of Calvinism by no means involves Calvin's dogma as to total mankind. Evidently its intent makes it applicable but to individuals. Not many are the examples of this depravity which the gallows and jail supply. At any rate for notable instances since these have no vulgar alloy of the brute in them but invariably are dominated by intellectuality, one must go else where. Civilization, especially if of the austerer sort is auspicious to it. It folds itself in the mantle of respectability. It has its certain negative virtues serving as silent auxiliaries. It never allows wine to get within its guard. It is not going too far to say that it is without vices or small sins. There is a phenomenal pride in it that excludes them from any

thing mercenary or avaricious. In short the depravity here meant partakes nothing of the sordid or sensual. It is serious but free from acerbity. Though no flatterer of mankind it never speaks ill of it.

But the thing which in eminent instances signalizes so exceptional a nature is this: though the man's even temper and discreet bearing would seem to intimate a mind peculiarly subject to the law of reason, not the less in his heart he would seem to riot in complete exemption from that law having apparently little to do with reason further than to employ it as an ambidexter implement for effecting the irrational. That is to say: Toward the accomplishment of an aim which in wantonness of malignity would seem to partake of the insane he will direct a cool judgement sagacious and sound.

These men are true madmen and of the most dangerous sort for their lunacy is not continuous but occasionally evoked by some special object: it is probably secretive which is as much to say it is self-contained so that when moreover most active it is to the average mind not distinguishable from sanity and for the reason above suggested that whatever its aims may be and the aim is never declared—the method and the outward proceeding are always perfectly rational.

Now something such an one was Claggart in whom was the mania of an evil nature, not engendered by vicious training or corrupting books or licentious living but born with him and innate in short a depravity according to nature.

## 12

Lawyers Experts Clergy  
An Episode

By the way can it be the phenomenon disowned or at least concealed that in some criminal case puzzles the courts? For this cause have our juries at times not only to endure the prolonged contentions of lawyers with their fees but also the yet more perplexing strife of the medical experts with theirs?—But why leave it to them? why not subpoena (?) as well the clerical proficient? Their vocation bringing them into peculiar contact with so many human beings, and sometimes in their least guarded hour, in interviews very much more confidential than those of physician and patient this would seem to qualify them to know something about those intricacies involved in the question of moral responsibility whether in a given case say, the crime proceeded from mania in the brain or rabies of the heart. As to any differences among themselves these clerical proficient might develop on the stand, these could hardly be greater than the direct contradictions exchanged between the remunerated medical experts

Dark sayings are these, some will say. But why? Is it because they somewhat savor of Holy Writ in its phrase mysteries of iniquity? If they do, such savor was far enough from being intended for little will it commend these pages to many a reader of to-day.

The point of the present story turning on the hidden nature of the master-at-arms has necessitated this chapter. With an added hint or two in connection with the incident at the mess the resumed narrative must be left to vindicate, as it may, its own credibility.

## 13

Pale ire, envy and despair

That Claggart's figure was not amiss and his face, save the chin well moulded has already been said. Of these favorable points he seemed not insensible, for he was not only neat but careful in his dress. But the form of Billy Budd was heroic and if his face was without the intellectual look of the pallid Claggart's not the less was it lit like his from within though from a different source. The bonfire in his heart made luminous the rose tint in his cheek.

In view of the marked contrast between the persons of the twain it is more than probable that when the master-at-arms in the scene last given applied to the sailor the proverb *Handsome is as handsome does* he there let escape an ironic intimation not caught by the young sailors who heard it, as to what it was that had first moved him against Billy namely his significant personal beauty.

Now envy and antipathy passions irreconcilable in reason nevertheless in fact may spring conjoined like Chang and Eng in one birth. Is Envy then such a monster? Well though many an arraigned mortal has in hopes of mitigated penalty pleaded guilty to horrible actions, did ever anybody seriously confess to envy? Something there is in it universally felt to be more shameful than even felonious crime. And not only does everybody disown it but the better sort are inclined to incredulity when it is in earnest imputed to an intelligent man. But since its lodgement is in the heart not the brain no degree of intellect supplies a guarantee against it. But Claggart was no vulgar form of the passion. Nor as directed toward Billy Budd did it partake of that streak of apprehensive jealousy that marred Saul's visage perturbedly brooding on the comely young David. Claggart's envy struck deeper. If askance he eyed the good looks, cheery health and frank enjoyment of young life in Billy Budd it was because these went along with a nature that as Claggart magnetically felt, had in its simplicity never willed malice or experienced the reactionary bite of that



serpent To him the spirit lodged within Billy, and looking out from his welkin eyes as from windows that ineffability it was which made the dimple in his dyed cheek suppld his joints and dancing in his yellow curls made him preeminently the Handsome Sailor One person excepted the master at arms was perhaps the only man in the ship intellectually capable of adequately appreciating the moral phenomenon presented in Billy Budd And the insight but intensified his passion which assuming various secret forms within him at times assumed that of cynic disdain—disdain of innocence—To be nothing more than innocent! Yet in an aesthetic way he saw the charm of it the courageous free and easy temper of it and fain would have shared it but he despaired of it

With no power to annul the elemental evil in him though readily enough he could hide it apprehending the good but powerless to be it a nature like Claggart's surcharged with energy as such natures almost invariably are what recourse is left to it but to recoil upon itself and like the scorpion for which the Creator alone is responsible act out to the end the part allotted it

## 14

Passion and passion in its profoundest is not a thing demanding a palatial stage whereon to play its part Down among the groundlings among the beggars and rakers of the garbage profound passion is enacted And the circumstances that provoke it how ever trivial or mean, are no measure of its power In the present instance the stage is a scrubbed gun deck, and one of the external provocations a man of war's man's spilled soup

Now when the Master-at arms noticed whence came that greasy fluid streaming before his feet he must have taken it—to some extent wilfully perhaps—not for the mere accident it assuredly was but for the sly escape of a spontaneous feeling on Billy's part more or less answering to the antipathy on his own In effect a foolish demonstration he must have thought and very harmless like the futile kick of a heifer which yet were the heifer a shod stallion would not be so harmless Even so was it that into the gall of Claggart's envy he infused the vitriol of his contempt But the incident confirmed to him certain tell tale reports purveyed to his ear by *Squeak* one of his more cunning Corporals, a grizzled little man, so nicknamed by the sailors on account of his squeaky voice and sharp visage ferreting about the dark corners of the lower decks after interlopers, satirically suggesting to them the idea of a rat in a cellar

From his Chief's employing him as an implicit tool in laying little traps for the worm of the Foretopman—for it was from the Master-at arms that

the petty persecutions heretofore adverted to had proceeded—the corporal having naturally enough concluded that his master could have no love for the sailor made it his business faithful understrapper that he was to foment the ill blood by perverting to his Chief certain innocent frolics of the good natured Foretopman besides inventing for his mouth sundry contumelious epithets he claimed to have overheard him let fall The Master at arms never suspected the veracity of these reports more especially as to the epithets for he well knew how secretly unpopular may become a master at arms at least a master-at arms of those days zealous in his function and how the blue jackets shoot at him in private their raillery and wit the nickname by which he goes among them (*Jimmy Legs*) implying under the form of merriment their cherished disrespect and dislike

But in view of the greediness of hate for patrolmen it hardly needed a purveyor to feed Claggart's passion An uncommon prudence is habitual with the subtler depravity for it has everything to hide And in case of an injury but suspected its secretiveness voluntarily cuts it off from enlightenment or disillusion and, not unreluctantly action is taken upon surmise as upon certainty And the retaliation is apt to be in monstrous disproportion to the supposed offence for when in anybody was revenge in its exactions aught else but an inordinate usurer But how with Claggart's conscience? for though consciences are unlike as foreheads every intelligence not excluding the Scriptural devils who believe and tremble, has one But Claggart's conscience being but the lawyer to his will made ogres of trifles probably arguing that the motive imputed to Billy in spilling the soup just when he did together with the epithets alleged these if nothing more made a strong case against him nay justified animosity into a sort of retributive righteousness The Pharisee is the Guy Fawkes prowling in the hid chambers underlying the Claggarts And they can really form no conception of an unreciprocated malice Probably the master at arms clandestine persecution of Billy was started to try the temper of the man but it had not developed any quality in him that enmity could make official use of or even pervert into even plausible self justification so that the occurrence at the mess petty if it were was a welcome one to that peculiar conscience assigned to be the private mentor of Claggart And for the rest not improbably it put him upon new experiments

## 15

Not many days after the last incident narrated some thing befell Billy Budd that more gravelled him than aught that had previously occurred



It was a warm night for the latitude and the Foretopman whose watch at the time was properly below was dozing on the uppermost deck whither he had ascended from his hot hammock one of hundreds suspended so closely wedged together over a lower gun deck that there was little or no swing to them. He lay as in the shadow of a hull side stretched under the lee of the *booms* a piled ridge of spare spars amidships between foremast and mainmast and among which the ship's largest boat the launch was stowed. Alongside of three other slumbers from below he lay near that end of the booms which approaches the foremast his station aloft on duty as a foretopman being just over the deck station of the forecasclemen entitling him according to usage to make himself more or less at home in that neighborhood.

Presently he was stirred into semi-consciousness by somebody who must have previously sounded the sleep of the others touching his shoulder and then as the Foretopman raised his head breathing into his ear in a quick whisper Slip into the lee forechains Billy there is something in the wind. Don't speak. Quick I will meet you there and disappeared.

Now Billy like sundry other essentially good-natured ones had some of the weaknesses inseparable from essential good nature and among these was a reluctance almost an incapacity of plumply saying *no* to an abrupt proposition not obviously absurd on the face of it nor obviously unfriendly nor iniquitous. And being of warm blood he had not the phlegm tacitly to negative any proposition by unresponsive inaction. Like his sense of fear his apprehension as to aught outside of the honest and natural was seldom very quick. Besides upon the present occasion the drowse from his sleep still hung upon him.

However it was, he mechanically rose and sleepily wondering what could be in the wind betook himself to the designated place a narrow platform one of six outside of the high bulwarks and screened by the great dead eyes and multiple columned lanyards of the shrouds and back stays and in a great warship of that time of dimensions commensurate to the hull's magnitude a tarry balcony in short overhanging the sea and so secluded that one mariner of the *Indomitable*, a non-conformist old tar of a serious turn made it even in daytime his private oratory.

In this retired nook the stranger soon joined Billy Budd. There was no moon as yet a haze obscured the star-light. He could not distinctly see the stranger's face. Yet from something in the outline and carriage Billy took him to be, and correctly for one of the afterguard.

Hist! Billy said the man in the same quick

cautionary whisper as before. You were impressed weren't you? Well so was I and he paused as to mark the effect. But Billy not knowing exactly what to make of this said nothing. Then the other. We are not the only impressed ones Billy. There's a gang of us—Couldn't you—help—at a pinch?

What do you mean? demanded Billy here shaking off his drowse.

Hist hist! the hurried whisper now growing husky see here and the man held up two small objects faintly twinkling in the night-light see they are yours Billy if you'll only—

But Billy broke in, and in his resentful eagerness to deliver himself his vocal infirmity somewhat intruded. D-D Damme I don't know what you are doing at or what you mean but you had better go go where you belong! For the moment the fellow as confounded did not stir and Billy springing to his feet said If you don't start I'll toss you back over the rail! There was no mistaking this and the mysterious emissary decamped disappearing in the direction of the mainmast in the shadow of the booms.

Hallo what's the matter? here came growling from a forecasclemen awakened from his deck-doze by Billy's raised voice. And as the foretopman reappeared and was recognized by him Ah Beauty is it you? Well, something must have been the matter for you st-stuttered.

O rejoined Billy now mastering the impediment I found an afterguardsman in our put of the ship here and I bid him be off where he belongs.

And is that all you did about it foretopman? gruffly demanded another an ascable old fellow of brick-colored visage and hair and who was known to his associate forecasclemen as *Red Pepper*. Such sneaks I should like to marry to the gunner's daughter! by that expression meaning that he would like to subject them to disciplinary castigation over a gun.

However Billy's rendering of the matter satisfactorily accounted to these inquirers for the brief commotion since of all the sections of a ship's company the forecasclemen veterans for the most part and bigoted in their sea prejudices are the most jealous in resenting territorial encroachments especially on the part of any of the afterguard of whom they have but a sorry opinion chiefly landsmen, never going aloft except to reef or furl the mainsail and in no wise competent to handle a mainline spike or turn in a *dead-eye* say.

This incident sorely puzzled Billy Budd. It was an entirely new experience the first time in his life that he had ever been personally approached in under

hand intriguing fashion Prior to this encounter he had known nothing of the afterguardsman, the two men being stationed wide apart one forward and aloft during his watch the other on deck and aft

What could it mean? And could they really be guineas those two glittering objects the interloper had held up to his (Billy's) eyes? Where could the fellow get guineas? Why even buttons spare buttons are not so plentiful at sea The more he turned the matter over the more he was non plussed and made uneasy and discomforted In his disgustful recoil from an overture which though he but ill comprehended he instinctively knew must involve evil of some sort Billy Budd was like a young horse fresh from the pasture suddenly inhaling a vile whiff from some chemical factory and by repeated snortings tries to get it out of his nostrils and lungs This frame of mind barred all desire of holding further parley with the fellow even were it but for the purpose of gaining some enlightenment as to his design in approaching him And yet he was not without natural curiosity to see how such a visitor in the dark would look in broad day

He espied him the following afternoon in his first dog watch below one of the smokers on that forward part of the upper gun deck allotted to the pipe He recognized him by his general cut and build more than by his round freckled face and glassy eyes of pale blue veiled with lashes all but white And yet Billy was a bit uncertain whether indeed it were he—yonder chap about his own age chatting and laughing in free hearted way leaning against a gun a genial young fellow enough to look at and some thing of a rattle brain to all appearance Rather chubby too for a sailor even an afterguardsman In short the last man in the world one would think to be overburthened with thoughts especially those perilous thoughts that must needs belong to a conspirator in any serious project or even to the underling of such a conspirator

Although Billy was not aware of it the fellow with a sidelong watchful glance had perceived Billy first, and then noting that Billy was looking at him thereupon nodded a familiar sort of friendly recognition as to an old acquaintance without interrupting the talk he was engaged in with the group of smokers A day or two afterwards chancing in the evening promenade on a gun deck to pass Billy he offered a flying word of good fellowship as it were, which by its unexpectedness and equivocalness under the circumstances so embarrassed Billy that he knew not how to respond to it, and let it go unnoticed

Billy was now left more at a loss than before The ineffectual speculations into which he was led were so disturbingly alien to him that he did his best to smother them It never entered his mind that here

was a matter which from its extreme questionable-ness it was his duty as a loyal blue jacket to report in the proper quarter And, probably had such a step been suggested to him he would have been deterred from taking it by the thought one of novice magnanimity that it would savor overmuch of the dirty work of a tell tale He kept the thing to himself Yet upon one occasion he could not forbear a little disburdening himself to the old Dansker, tempted thereto perhaps by the influence of a balmy night when the ship lay becalmed the twain silent for the most part sitting together on deck their heads propped against the bulwarks But it was only a partial and anonymous account that Billy gave, the unfounded scruples above referred to preventing full disclosure to anybody Upon hearing Billy's version the sage Dansker seemed to divine more than he was told and after a little meditation during which his wrinkles were pursed as into a point quite effacing for the time that quizzing expression his face sometimes wore — Didn't I say so, Baby Budd?

Say what? demanded Billy

Why *Jemmy Legs* is down on you

And what rejoined Billy in amazement has *Jemmy Legs* to do with that cracked afterguardsman?

Ho it was an afterguardsman then A cats-paw, a cats-paw! And with that exclamation which, whether it had reference to a light puff of air just then coming over the calm sea or subtler relation to the afterguardsman there is no telling the old Merlin gave a twisting wrench with his black teeth at his plug of tobacco, vouchsafing no reply to Billy's impetuous question though now repeated for it was his wont to relapse into grim silence when interrogated in skeptical sort as to any of his sententious oracles not always very clear ones, rather partaking of that obscurity which invests most Delphic deliverances from any quarter

Long experience had very likely brought this old man to that bitter prudence which never interferes in aught and never gives advice

## 17

Yes despite the Dansker's pithy insistence as to the Master at arms being at the bottom of these strange experiences of Billy on board the *Indomitable*, the young sailor was ready to ascribe them to almost anybody but the man who to use Billy's own expression always had a pleasant word for him This is to be wondered at Yet not so much to be wondered at In certain matters, some sailors even in mature life remain unsophisticated enough But a young seafarer of the disposition of our athletic Foretopman, is much of a child-man And yet a child's utter

innocence is but its blank ignorance and the innocence more or less wanes as intelligence waxes. But in Billy Budd intelligence, such as it was, had advanced, while yet his simplemindedness remained for the most part unaffected. Experience is a teacher indeed; yet did Billy's years make his experience small. Besides, he had none of that intuitive knowledge of the bad which in natures not good or incompletely so foreruns experience and therefore may pertain as in some instances it too clearly does pertain even to youth.

And what could Billy know of man except of man as a mere sailor? And the old-fashioned sailor, the veritable man before the mast, the sailor from boyhood up, he, though indeed of the same species as a landsman, is in some respects singularly distinct from him. The sailor's frankness, the landsman's finesse. Life is not a game with the sailor, demanding the long head, no intricate game of chess where few moves are made in straightforwardness and ends are attained by indirection, an oblique, tedious, barren game hardly worth that poor candle burnt out in playing it.

Yes, as a class sailors are in character a juvenile race. Even their deviations are marked by juvenility. And this more especially holding true with the sailors of Billy's time. Then too certain things which apply to all sailors do more pointedly operate here and there upon the junior one. Every sailor too is accustomed to obey orders without debating them; his life afloat is externally ruled for him; he is not brought into that promiscuous commerce with mankind where unobstructed free agency on equal terms—equal superficially at least—soon teaches one that unless upon occasion he exercise a distrust keen in proportion to the fauness of the appearance, some foul turn may be served him. A ruled, undemonstrative distrustfulness is so habitual, not with businessmen so much as with men who know their kind in less shallow relations than business. Namely, certain men of the world, that they come at last to employ it all but unconsciously, and some of them would very likely feel real surprise at being charged with it as one of their general characteristics.

## 18

But after the little matter at the mess Billy Budd no more found himself in strange trouble at times about his hammock or his clothes-bag or what not. While as to that smile that occasionally sunned him and the pleasant passing word, these were if not more frequent yet if anything more pronounced than before.

But for all that, there were certain other demonstrations now. When Claggart's unobserved glance happened to light on belted Billy rolling along the

upper gun-deck in the leisure of the second dog-watch, exchanging passing broadsides of fun with other young promenaders in the crowd, that glance would follow the cheerful *scari* Hyperion with a settled meditative and melancholy expression; his eyes strangely suffused with incipient feverish tears. Then would Claggart look like the man of sorrows. Yes, and sometimes the melancholy expression would have in it a touch of soft yearning, as if Claggart could even have loved Billy, but for fate and ban. But this was an evanescence and quickly repented of, as it were, by an immitigable look, pinching and shrivelling the visage into the momentary semblance of a wrinkled walnut. But sometimes catching sight in advance of the foretopman coming in his direction, he would upon their nearing step aside a little to let him pass, dwelling upon Billy for the moment with the glittering dental satire of a Guise. But upon any abrupt unforeseen encounter, a red light would flash forth from his eye like a spunk from an unvil in a dusk smithy. That quick fierce light was a strange one, darted from orbs which in repose were of a color nearest approaching a deeper violet, the softest of shades.

Though some of these caprices of the pit could not but be observed by their object, yet were they beyond the construing of such a nature. And the *thems* of Billy were hardly compatible with that sort of sensitive spiritual organisation which in some cases instinctively conveys to ignorant innocence an admonition of the proximity of the malign. He thought the Master at arms acted in a manner rather queer at times. That was all. But the occasional frank, clear and pleasant word went for what they purported to be the young sailor never having heard as yet of the too far spoken man.

Had the foretopman been conscious of having done or said anything to provoke the ill will of the official, it would have been different with him, and his sight might have been purged if not sharpened. As it was, innocence was his blinder.

So was it with him in yet another matter. Two minor officers—the Aimorer and Captun of the Hold, with whom he had never exchanged a word, his position in the ship not bringing him into contact with them, these men now for the first began to cast upon Billy when they chanced to encounter him that peculiar glance which evidences that the man from whom it comes has been some way tampered with and to the prejudice of him upon whom the glance lights. Never did it occur to Billy as a thing to be noted or a thing suspicious, though he well knew the fact that the Aimorer and Captun of the Hold, with the ship's yeoman, apothecary and others of that grade, were by naval usage mess mates of the master-at-arms, men with ears convenient to his confidential tongue.

But the general popularity that our *Handsome Sailor's* manly forwardness upon occasion and irresistible good nature indicating no mental superiority tending to excite an invidious feeling this good will on the part of most of his shipmates made him the less to concern himself about such mute aspects toward him as those whereto allusion has just been made

As to the afterguardsman though Billy for reasons already given necessarily saw little of him yet when the two did happen to meet, invariably came the fellows off hand cheerful recognition sometimes accompanied by a passing pleasant word or two. What ever that equivocal young person's original design may really have been, or the design of which he might have been the deputy certain it was from his manner upon these occasions, that he had wholly dropped it

It was as if his precocity of crookedness (and every vulgar villain is precocious) had for once deceived him and the man he had sought to entrap as a simpleton had through his very simplicity ignominiously baffled him

But shrewd ones may opine that it was hardly possible for Billy to refrain from going up to the afterguardsman and bluntly demanding to know his purpose in the initial interview so abruptly closed in the fore chains. Shrewd ones may also think it but natural in Billy to set about sounding some of the other impressed men of the ship in order to discover what basis if any there was for the emissary's obscure suggestions as to plotting disaffection aboard. Yes the shrewd may so think. But something more or rather something else than mere shrewdness is perhaps needful for the due understanding of such a character as Billy Budd's

As to Claggart the monomania in the man—if that indeed it were—as involuntarily disclosed by starts in the manifestations detailed yet in general covered over by his self contained and rational demeanour this like a subterranean fire was eating its way deeper and deeper in him. Something decisive must come of it

## 19

After the mysterious interview in the fore chains, the one so abruptly ended there by Billy nothing especially German to the story occurred until the events now about to be narrated

Elsewhere it has been said that in the lack of frigates (of course better sailers than line of battle ships) in the English squadron up the Straits at that period, the *Indomitable* was occasionally employed not only as an available substitute for a scout but at times on detached service of more important kind. This was not alone because of her sailing qualities, not common in a ship of her rate, but

quite as much probably that the character of her commander it was thought specially adapted him for any duty where under unforeseen difficulties a prompt initiative might have to be taken in some matter demanding knowledge and ability in addition to those qualities implied in good seamanship. It was on an expedition of the latter sort a somewhat distant one and when the *Indomitable* was almost at her furthest remove from the fleet that in the latter part of an afternoon watch she unexpectedly came in sight of a ship of the enemy. It proved to be a frigate. The latter perceiving through the glass that the weight of men and metal would be heavily against her invoking her light heels crowded sail to get away. After a chase urged almost against hope and lasting until about the middle of the first dog watch, she signally succeeded in effecting her escape

Not long after the pursuit had been given up, and ere the excitement incident thereto had altogether waned away the Master at Arms ascending from his cavernous sphere made his appearance cap in hand by the mainmast respectfully waiting the notice of Captain Vere then solitary walking the weather-side of the quarter deck doubtless somewhat chafed at the failure of the pursuit. The spot where Claggart stood was the place allotted to men of lesser grades seeking some more particular interview either with the officer-of the deck or the Captain himself. But from the latter it was not often that a sailor or petty officer of those days would seek a hearing only some exceptional cause would according to established custom have warranted that

Presently just as the Commander absorbed in his reflections was on the point of turning aft in his promenade he became sensible of Claggart's presence, and saw the doffed cap held in deferential expectancy. Here be it said that Captain Vere's personal knowledge of this petty-officer had only begun at the time of the ship's last sailing from home. Claggart then for the first in transfer from a ship detained for repairs suppling on board the *Indomitable* the place of a previous master at arms disabled and ashore

No sooner did the Commander observe who it was that now deferentially stood awaiting his notice, than a peculiar expression came over him. It was not unlike that which uncontrollably will flit across the countenance of one at unawares encountering a person who though known to him indeed has hardly been long enough known for thorough knowledge but something in whose aspect nevertheless now for the first provokes a vaguely repellent distaste. But coming to a stand and resuming much of his wonted official manner save that a sort of impatience lurked in the intonation of the opening word, he said, 'Well? what is it Master at Arms?'

With the air of a subordinate grieved at the necessity of being a messenger of ill tidings and while conscientiously determined to be frank yet equally resolved upon shunning overstatement Claggart at this invitation or rather summons to disburthen spoke up. What he said conveyed in the language of no uneducated man was to the effect following if not altogether in these words namely that during the chase and preparations for the possible encounter he had seen enough to convince him that at least one sailor aboard was a dangerous character in a ship mustering some who not only had taken a guilty part in the late serious troubles but others also who like the man in question had entered His Majesty's service under another form than enlistment.

At this point Captain Vere with some impatience interrupted him. Be direct man say impressed men.

Claggart made a gesture of subseivence and proceeded.

Quite lately he (Claggart) had begun to suspect that on the gun decks some sort of movement prompted by the sailor in question was covertly going on but he had not thought himself warranted in reporting the suspicion so long as it remained indistinct. But from what he had that afternoon observed in the man referred to the suspicion of something clandestine going on had advanced to a point less removed from certainty. He deeply felt he added the serious responsibility assumed in making a report involving such possible consequences to the individual mainly concerned besides tending to augment those natural anxieties which every naval commander must feel in view of extraordinary outbreaks so recent as those which he sorrowfully said it, it needed not to name.

Now at the first broaching of the matter Captain Vere taken by surprise could not wholly dissemble his disquietude. But as Claggart went on the former's aspect changed into restiveness under something in the witness manner in giving his testimony. However, he refrained from interrupting him. And Claggart, continuing concluded with this.

God forbid your honor that the *Indomitable's* should be the experience of the —

Never mind that! here preemptorily broke in the superior his face altering with anger, instinctively divining the ship that the other was about to name one in which the *Noie Mutiny* had assumed a singularly tragical character that for a time jeopardized the life of its commander. Under the circumstances he was indignant at the purposed allusion. When the commissioned officers themselves were on all occasions very heedful how they referred to the recent events for a petty officer unnecessarily to allude to them in the presence of his Captain,

this struck him as a most immodest presumption. Besides to his quick sense of self respect it even looked under the circumstances something like an attempt to alarm him. Not at first was he without some surprise that one who so far as he had hitherto come under his notice had shown considerable tact in his function should in this particular evince such lack of it.

But these thoughts and kindred dubious ones flitting across his mind were suddenly replaced by an intuitional surmise which though as yet obscure in form served practically to affect his reception of the ill tidings. Certain it is that long versed in every thing pertaining to the complicated gun deck life, which like every other form of life has its secret mines and dubious side the side popularly disclaimed Captain Vere did not permit himself to be unduly disturbed by the general tenor of his subordinate's report. Furthermore if in view of recent events prompt action should be taken at the first palpable sign of recurring insubordination, for all that not judicious would it be he thought to keep the idea of lingering disaffection alive by undue forwardness in crediting an informer even if his own subordinate and charged among other things with police surveillance of the crew. This feeling would not perhaps have so prevailed with him were it not that upon a prior occasion the patriotic zeal officially evinced by Claggart had somewhat irritated him as appearing rather supersensible and strained. Furthermore something even in the official self-possessed and somewhat ostentatious manner in making his specifications strangely reminded him of a bandsman, a perjurious witness in a capital case before a court martial ashore of which when a lieutenant he Captain Vere had been a member.

Now the peremptory check given to Claggart in the matter of the arrested allusion was quickly followed up by this. You say that there is at least one dangerous man aboard. Name him.

William Budd. A foretopman your honor—

William Budd repeated Captain Vere with unfeigned astonishment and meant you the man that Lieutenant Ratcliff took from the merchantman not very long ago—the young fellow who seems to be so popular with the men—Billy the Handsome Sailor as they call him?

The same your honor but for all his youth and good looks a deep one. Not for nothing does he insinuate himself into the good will of his shipmates since at the least all hands will at a pinch say a good word for him at all hazards. Did Lieutenant Ratcliffe happen to tell your honor of that adroit fling of Budd's jumping up in the cutter's bow under the merchantman's stern when he was being taken off? It is even masqued by that sort of good humored air that at heart he resents his impressment. You

have but noted his fair cheek. A man trap may be under his ruddy tipped daisies.

Now the *Handsome Sailor* as a signal figure among the crew had naturally enough attracted the Captain's attention from the first. Though in general not very demonstrative to his officers, he had congratulated Lieutenant Ratcliffe upon his good fortune in lighting on such a fine specimen of the genus homo who in the nude might have posed for a statue of young Adam before the Fall. As to Billy's adieu to the ship *Rights of Man*, which the boarding lieutenant had indeed reported to him, but in a deferential way more as a good story than aught else, Captain Vere, though mistakenly understanding it as a satiric sally, had but thought so much the better of the impressed man for it, as a military sailor, admiring the spirit that could take an arbitrary enlistment so merrily and sensibly. The foretopman's conduct too, so far as it had fallen under the Captain's notice, had confirmed the first happy augury while the new recruits, qualities as a *sailor-man*, seemed to be such that he had thought of recommending him to the executive officer for promotion to a place that would more frequently bring him under his own observation, namely the captaincy of the mizzen top, replacing there in the starboard watch a man not so young whom partly for that reason he deemed less fitted for the post. Be it parenthesized here that since the mizzen topmen having not to handle such breadths of heavy canvas as the lower sails on the main mast and fore mast, a young man if of the right stuff, not only seems best adapted to duty there, but in fact is generally selected for the captaincy of that top and the company under him are light hands and often but strip-lings. In sum, Captain Vere had from the beginning deemed Billy Budd to be what in the naval parlance of the time was called a *Kings bargain*, that is to say for His Britannic Majesty's navy a capital investment at small outlay or none at all.

After a brief pause during which the reminiscences above mentioned passed vividly through his mind and he weighed the import of Claggart's last suggestion conveyed in the phrase, pitfall under the clover, and the more he weighed it the less reliance he felt in the informer's good faith. Suddenly he turned upon him and in a low voice, "Do you come to me, Master-at-Arms, with so foggy a tale? As to Budd, cite me an act or spoken word of his confirmation of what you in general charge against him, Stay, drawing nearer to him, heed what you speak. Just now and in a case like this, there is a yard-arm end for the false-witness."

"Ah, your honor!" sighed Claggart, mildly shaking his shapely head as in sad deprecation of such unmerited severity of tone. Then bridling—erecting himself as in virtuous self-assertion, he circumstan-

tially alleged certain words and acts which collectively if credited led to presumptions mortally inculpating Budd. And for some of these averments he added substantiating proof was not far.

With gray eyes impatient and distrustful, essaying to fathom to the bottom Claggart's calm violet ones, Captain Vere again heard him out, then for the moment stood ruminating. The mood he evinced, Claggart—himself for the time liberated from the others' scrutiny—steadily regarded with a look difficult to render—a look curious of the operation of his tactics, a look such as might have been that of the spokesman of the envious children of Jacob, deceptively imposing upon the troubled patriarch the blood-dyed coat of young Joseph.

Though something exceptional in the moral quality of Captain Vere made him in earnest encounter with a fellow man, a veritable touch-stone of that man's essential nature, yet now as to Claggart and what was really going on in him, his feeling partook less of intuitional conviction than of strong suspicion clogged by strange dubieties. The perplexity he evinced proceeded less from aught touching the man informed against—as Claggart doubtless opined—than from considerations how best to act in regard to the informer. At first indeed he was naturally for summoning that substantiation of his allegations which Claggart said was at hand. But such a proceeding would result in the matter at once getting abroad, which in the present stage of it, he thought might undesirably affect the ship's company. If Claggart was a false witness—that closed the affair. And therefore before trying the accusation, he would first practically test the accuser, and he thought this could be done in a quiet undemonstrative way.

The measure he determined upon involved a shifting of the scene, a transfer to a place less exposed to observation than the broad quarter-deck. For although the few gun-room officers there at the time had in due observance of naval etiquette withdrawn to leeward the moment Captain Vere had begun his promenade on the deck's weather-side, and though during the colloquy with Claggart they of course ventured not to diminish the distance, and though throughout the interview Captain Vere's voice was far from high, and Claggart's silvery and low, and the wind in the cordage and the wash of the sea helped the more to put them beyond ear-shot, nevertheless, the interview's continuance already had attracted observation from some topmen aloft and other sailors in the waist or further forward.

Having determined upon his measures, Captain Vere forthwith took action. Abruptly turning to Claggart, he asked, "Master-at-Arms, is it now Budd's watch aloft?"

"No, your honor. Whereupon, Mr. Wilkes!"



summoning the nearest midshipman, tell Albert to come to me. Albert was the Captain's hammock boy, a sort of servalet in whose discretion and fidelity his master had much confidence. The lad appeared. You know Budd the foretopman?

I do, Sir.

Go find him. It is his watch off. Manage to tell him out of earshot that he is wanted aft. Contrive it that he speaks to nobody. Keep him in talk yourself. And not till you get well aft here, not till then let him know that the place where he is wanted is my cabin. You understand. Go.—Master-at-Arms, show yourself on the decks below, and when you think it time for Albert to be coming with his man, stand by quietly to follow the sailor in.

## 20

Now when the foretopman found himself closeted there, as it were, in the cabin with the Captain and Claggart, he was surprised enough. But it was a surprise unaccompanied by apprehension or distrust. To an immature nature essentially honest and humane, forewarning intimations of subtler danger from one's kind come tardily if at all. The only thing that took shape in the young sailor's mind was this: Yes, the Captain. I have always thought looks kindly upon me. Wonder if he's going to make me his coxswain. I should like that. And maybe now he is going to ask the master-at-arms about me.

Shut the door, there, sentry, said the commander, stand without and let nobody come in.—Now, master-at-arms, tell this man to his face what you told of him to me, and stood prepared to scrutinize the mutually confronting visages.

With the measured step and calm collected air of an asylum physician approaching in the public hall some patient beginning to show indications of a coming paroxysm, Claggart deliberately advanced within short range of Billy and mesmerically looking him in the eye, briefly recapitulated the accusation.

Not at first did Billy take it in. When he did, the rose-tan of his cheek looked struck as by white leprosy. He stood like one impaled and gagged. Meanwhile the accuser's eyes, removing not as yet from the blue dilated ones, underwent a phenomenal change: their wonted rich violet color blurring into a muddy purple. Those lights of human intelligence losing human expression, gelidly protruding like the alien eyes of certain uncatalogued creatures of the deep. The first mesmeric glance was one of serpent fascination; the last was as the hungry lurch of the torpedo fish.

Speak, man! said Captain Vere to the transfixed one struck by his aspect even more than by Claggart's. Speak! defend yourself. Which appeal caused but a strange dumb gesturing and gurgling

in Billy, amazement at such an accusation so suddenly sprung on inexperienced nonage; this and, it may be, horror of the accuser serving to bring out his lurking defect and in this instance for the time intensifying it into a convulsed tongue-tie while the intent head and entire form straining forward in an agony of ineffectual eagerness to obey the injunction to speak and defend himself gave an expression to the face like that of a condemned Vestal priestess in the moment of being buried alive, and in the first struggle against suffocation.

Though at the time Captain Vere was quite ignorant of Billy's liability to vocal impediment, he now immediately divined it, since vividly Billy's aspect recalled to him that of a bright young school-mate of his whom he had once seen struck by much the same startling impotence in the act of eagerly rising in the class to be foremost in response to a testing question put to it by the master. Going close up to the young sailor and laying a soothing hand on his shoulder, he said: There is no hurry, my boy. Take your time, take your time. Contrary to the effect intended, these words so fatherly in tone doubtless touching Billy's heart to the quick, prompted yet more violent efforts at utterance—efforts soon ending for the time in confirming the paralysis and bringing to his face an expression which was as a crucifixion to behold. The next instant, quick as the flame from a discharged cannon at night, his right arm shot out, and Claggart dropped to the deck. Whether intentionally or but owing to the young athlete's superior height, the blow had taken effect full upon the forehead, so shapely and intellectual looking a feature in the master-at-arms, so that the body fell over lengthwise, like a heavy plank tilted from erectness. A gasp or two, and he lay motionless.

Fated boy, breathed Captain Vere in tone so low as to be almost a whisper, what have you done! But here, help me.

The twain raised the felled one from the loins up into a sitting position. The spare form flexibly acquiesced but meekly. It was like handling a dead snake. They lowered it back, regaining erectness. Captain Vere, with one hand covering his face, stood to all appearance as impassive as the object at his feet. Was he absorbed in taking in all the bearings of the event and what was best not only now at once to be done but also in the sequel? Slowly he uncovered his face, and the effect was as if the moon emerging from eclipse should reappear with quite another aspect than that which had gone into hiding. The father in him manifested towards Billy thus far in the scene was replaced by the military disciplinarian. In his official tone he bade the foretopman retire to a state room aft (pointing it out) and there remain till thence summoned. This order Billy in silence mechanically obeyed. Then going to the



cabin door where it opened on the quarter deck, Captain Vere said to the sentry without Tell some body to send Albert here When the lad appeared his master so contrived it that he should not catch sight of the prone one Albert he said to him tell the Surgeon I wish to see him You need not come back till called When the Surgeon entered—a self-poised character of that grave sense and experience that hardly anything could take him aback—Captain Vere advanced to meet him thus unconsciously intercepting his view of Claggart and interrupting the others' wonted ceremonious salutation said, Nay tell me how it is with yonder man, directing his attention to the prostrate one

The Surgeon looked and for all his self command somewhat started at the abrupt revelation On Claggart's always pallid complexion, thick black blood was now oozing from nostril and ear To the gazer's professional eye it was unmistakably no living man that he saw

Is it so then? said Captain Vere intently watching him I thought it But verify it Whereupon the customary tests confirmed the Surgeon's first glance who now looking up in unfeigned concern cast a look of intense inquisitiveness upon his superior But Captain Vere with one hand to his brow was standing motionless Suddenly catching the Surgeon's arm convulsively, he exclaimed pointing down to the body—It is the divine judgment on Ananias! Look!

Disturbed by the excited manner he had never before observed in the *Indomitable's* Captain and as yet wholly ignorant of the affair the prudent Surgeon nevertheless held his peace only again looking an earnest interrogation as to what it was that had resulted in such a tragedy

But Captain Vere was now again motionless standing absorbed in thought But again starting he vehemently exclaimed—Struck dead by an angel of God! Yet the angel must hang!

At these passionate interjections mere incoherences to the listener as yet unapprised of the antecedents the Surgeon was profoundly discomposed But now as recollecting himself Captain Vere in less passionate tone briefly related the circumstances leading up to the event

But come we must despatch he added Help me to remove him (meaning the body) to yonder compartment designating one opposite that where the foretopman remained immured Anew disturbed by a request that as implying a desire for secrecy seemed unaccountably strange to him there was nothing for the subordinate to do but comply

Go now said Captain Vere with something of his wonted manner—Go now I shall presently call a drum head court Tell the lieutenants what has happened, and tell Mr Mordant, meaning the

captain of marines and charge them to keep the matter to themselves

## 21

Full of disquietude and misgiving the Surgeon left the cabin Was Captain Vere suddenly affected in his mind or was it but a transient excitement brought about by so strange and extraordinary a happening? As to the drum head court it struck the Surgeon as impolitic, if nothing more The thing to do he thought, was to place Billy Budd in confinement and in a way dictated by usage and postpone further action in so extraordinary a case, to such time as they should rejoin the squadron and then refer it to the Admiral He recalled the unwonted agitation of Captain Vere and his excited exclamations so at variance with his normal manner Was he unhinged? But assuming that he is it is not so susceptible of proof What then can he do? No more trying situation is conceivable than that of an officer subordinate under a Captain whom he suspects to be not mad indeed, but yet not quite unaffected in his intellect To argue his order to him would be insolence To resist him would be mutiny

In obedience to Captain Vere he communicated what had happened to the lieutenants and captain of marines saying nothing as to the Captain's state They fully shared his own surprise and concern Like him too they seemed to think that such a matter should be referred to the Admiral

## 22

Who in the rainbow can show the line where the violet tint ends and the orange tint begins? Distinctly we see the difference of the colors but when exactly does the one first blindingly enter into the other? So with sanity and insanity In pronounced cases there is no question about them But in some supposed cases, in various degrees supposedly less pronounced, to draw the exact line of demarkation few will undertake though for a fee some professional experts will There is nothing namable but that some men will undertake to do it for pay

Whether Captain Vere, as the Surgeon professionally and privately surmised was really the sudden victim of any degree of aberration one must determine for himself by such light as this narrative may afford

That the unhappy event which has been narrated could not have happened at a worse juncture was but too true For it was close on the heel of the suppressed insurrections an after time very critical to naval authority demanding from every English sea commander two qualities not readily interfusible—prudence and rigor Moreover there was something crucial in the case

In the jugglery of circumstances preceding and attending the event on board the *Indomitable* and in the light of that martial code whereby it was formally to be judged innocence and guilt personified in Claggart and Budd in effect changed places. In a legal view the apparent victim of the tragedy was he who had sought to victimize a man blameless and the indisputable deed of the latter navally regarded constituted the most heinous of military crimes. Yet more. The essential right and wrong involved in the matter the clearer that might be so much the worse for the responsibility of a loyal sea commander inasmuch as he was not authorized to determine the matter on that primitive basis.

Small wonder then that the *Indomitable's* Captain though in general a man of rapid decision felt that circumspectness not less than promptitude was necessary. Until he could decide upon his course and in each detail and not only so but until the concluding measure was upon the point of being enacted he deemed it advisable in view of all the circumstances to guard as much as possible against publicity. Here he may or may not have erred. Certain it is however that subsequently in the confidential talk of more than one or two gun-rooms and cabins he was not a little criticized by some officers—a fact imputed by his friends and vehemently by his cousin Jack Denton to professional jealousy of Stary Vere. Some *imaginative* ground for invidious comment there was. The maintenance of secrecy in the matter the confining all knowledge of it for a time to the place where the homicide occurred the quarter-deck cabin in these particulars lured some resemblance to the policy adopted in those tragedies of the palace which have occurred more than once in the capital founded by Peter the Barbarian.

The case indeed was such that fain would the *Indomitable's* captain have deferred taking any action whatever respecting it further than to keep the foretopman a close prisoner till the ship rejoined the squadron and then submitting the matter to the judgement of his Admiral.

But a true military officer is in one particular like a true monk. Not with more of self-abnegation will the latter keep his vows of monastic obedience than the former his vows of allegiance to martial duty.

Feeling that unless quick action was taken on it, the deed of the foretopman so soon as it should be known on the gun-decks would tend to awaken any slumbering embers of the Nore among the crew, a sense of the urgency of the case overruled in Captain Vere every other consideration. But though a conscientious disciplinarian he was no lover of authority for mere authority's sake. Very far was he from embracing opportunities for monopolizing to himself the perils of moral responsibility none at

least that could properly be referred to an official superior or shared with him by his official equals or even subordinates. So thinking he was glad it would not be at variance with usage to turn the matter over to a summary court of his own officers reserving to himself as the one on whom the ultimate accountability would rest the right of maintaining a supervision of it—of formally or informally interposing at need. Accordingly a drum-head court was summarily convened, he electing the individuals composing it, the First Lieutenant, the Captain of Marines and the Sailing Master.

In associating an officer of Marines with the sea lieutenants in a case having to do with a sailor the Commander perhaps deviated from general custom. He was prompted thereto by the circumstance that he took that soldier to be a judicious person, thoughtful and not altogether incapable of grappling with a difficult case unprecedented in his prior experience. Yet even as to him he was not without some latent misgiving for withal he was an extremely good-natured man, an enjoyer of his dinner, a sound sleeper and inclined to obesity. A man who though he would always maintain his manhood in battle might not prove altogether reliable in a moral dilemma involving right of the tragic. As to the First Lieutenant and the Sailing Master Captain Vere could not but be aware that though honest natures of approved gallantry upon occasion their intelligence was mostly confined to the matter of active seamanship and the fighting demands of their profession. The court was held in the same cabin where the unfortunate affair had taken place. This cabin the Commander's embraced the entire area under the poop-deck. Aft and on either side was a small state room, the one room temporarily a jail and the other a dead house and a yet smaller compartment leaving a space between, expanding forward into a goodly oblong of length coinciding with the ship's beam. A skylight of moderate dimension was overhead and at each end of the oblong space were two sashed port-hole windows easily convertible back into embrasures for short carriages.

All being quickly in readiness Billy Budd was arraigned. Captain Vere necessarily appearing as the sole witness in the case and as such temporarily sinking his rank, though singularly maintaining it in a matter apparently trivial, namely that he testified from the ship's weather side with that object having caused the court to sit on the lee side. Concisely he narrated all that had led up to the catastrophe, omitting nothing in Claggart's accusation and deposing as to the manner in which the prisoner had received it. At this testimony the three officers glanced with no little surprise at Billy Budd, the last man they would have suspected either of the muti-

nous design alleged by Claggart or the undeniable deed he himself had done

The First Lieutenant taking judicial primacy and turning toward the prisoner said Captain Vere has spoken Is it or is it not as Captain Vere says? In response came syllables not so much impeded in the utterance as might have been anticipated They were these Captain Vere tells the truth It is just as Captain Vere says but it is not as the Master at Arms said I have eaten the King's bread and I am true to the King

I believe you my man said the witness his voice indicating a suppressed emotion not otherwise betrayed

God will bless you for that Your Honor! not without stammering said Billy and all but broke down But immediately was recalled to self control by another question to which with the same emotional difficulty of utterance he said No there was no malice between us I never bore malice against the Master at arms I am sorry that he is dead I did not mean to kill him Could I have used my tongue I would not have struck him But he foully lied to my face and in presence of my Captain and I had to say something and I could only say it with a blow, God help me!

In the impulsive above board manner of the frank one the court saw confirmed all that was implied in words that just previously had perplexed them coming as they did from the testifier to the tragedy and promptly following Billy's impassioned disclaimer of mutinous intent—Captain Vere's words I believe you my man

Next it was asked of him whether he knew of or suspected aught savoring of incipient trouble (meaning mutiny though the explicit term was avoided) going on in any section of the ship's company

The reply lingered This was naturally imputed by the court to the same vocal embarrassment which had retarded or obstructed previous answers But in main it was otherwise here the question immediately recalling to Billy's mind the interview with the afterguardsman in the fore chains But an innate repugnance to playing a part at all approaching that of an informer against one's own shipmates—the same erring sense of unimstructed honor which had stood in the way of his reporting the matter at the time though as a loyal man of war-man it was incumbent on him and failure so to do if charged against him and proven would have subjected him to the heaviest of penalties this with the blind feeling now his that nothing really was being hatched prevailed with him When the answer came it was a negative

One question more, said the officer of marines now first speaking and with a troubled earnestness You tell us that what the Master at arms said

against you was a lie Now why should he have so lied so maliciously lied since you declare there was no malice between you?

At that question unintentionally touching on a spiritual sphere wholly obscure to Billy's thoughts he was nonplussed evincing a confusion indeed that some observers such as can readily be imagined would have construed into involuntary evidence of hidden guilt Nevertheless he strove some way to answer but all at once relinquished the vain endeavor at the same time turning an appealing glance towards Captain Vere as deeming him his best helper and friend Captain Vere who had been seated for a time rose to his feet addressing the interrogator The question you put to him comes naturally enough But how can he rightly answer it? or anybody else? unless indeed it be he who lies within there designating the compartment where lay the corpse But the prone one there will not rise to our summons In effect though as it seems to me the point you make is hardly material Quite aside from any conceivable motive actuating the Master at arms and irrespective of the provocation to the blow, a martial court must needs in the present case confine its attention to the blow's consequence, which consequence justly is to be deemed not otherwise than as the striker's deed

This utterance the full significance of which it was not at all likely that Billy took in nevertheless caused him to turn a wistful interrogative look toward the speaker a look in its dumb expressiveness not unlike that which a dog of generous breed might turn upon his master seeking in his face some elucidation of a previous gesture ambiguous to the canine intelligence Nor was the same utterance without marked effect upon the three officers more especially the soldier Couched in it seemed to them a meaning unanticipated, involving a prejudgement on the speaker's part It served to augment a mental disturbance previously evident enough

The soldier once more spoke in a tone of suggestive dubiety addressing at once his associates and Captain Vere Nobody is present—none of the ship's company I mean who might shed lateral light if any is to be had upon what remains mysterious in this matter

That is thoughtfully put said Captain Vere I see your drift Ay there is a mystery but to use a Scriptural phrase it is a mystery of iniquity a matter for psychologic theologians to discuss But what has a military court to do with it? Not to add that for us any possible investigation of it is cut off by the lasting tongue tie of—him—in yonder again designating the mortuary state room The prisoner's deed,—with that alone we have to do

To this, and particularly the closing reiteration, the marine soldier knowing not how aptly to reply,

sadly abstained from saying aught. The First Lieutenant who at the outset had not unnaturally assumed primacy in the court now overrulingly instructed by a glance from Captain Vere a glance more effective than words resumed that primacy. Turning to the prisoner Budd he said and scarce in equable tones Budd, if you have aught further to say for yourself, say it now.

Upon this the young sailor turned another quick glance toward Captain Vere then as taking a hint from that aspect a hint confirming his own instinct that silence was now best replied to the Lieutenant, I have said all Sir.

The marine—the same who had been the sentinel without the cabin-door at the time that the foretopman followed by the master at arms entered it—he standing by the sailor throughout these judicial proceedings was now directed to take him back to the after compartment originally assigned to the prisoner and his custodian. As the twain disappeared from view the three officers as partially liberated from some inward constraint associated with Billy's mere presence, simultaneously stirred in their seats. They exchanged looks of troubled indecision yet feeling that decide they must and without long delay. For Captain Vere he for the time stood unconsciously with his back toward them apparently in one of his absent fits gazing out from a squashed port hole to windward upon the monotonous blank of the twilight sea. But the court's silence continuing broken only at moments by brief consultations in low earnest tones this seemed to assure him and encourage him. Turning he to and-fro paced the cabin athwart in the returning ascent to windward, climbing the slant deck in the ship's lee roll without knowing it symbolizing thus in his action a mind resolute to surmount difficulties even if against primitive instincts strong as the wind and the sea. Presently he came to a stand before the three. After scanning their faces he stood less as mustering his thoughts for expression than as one only deliberating how best to put them to well meaning men not intellectually mature men with whom it was necessary to demonstrate certain principles that were axioms to himself. Similar impatience as to talking is perhaps one reason that deters some minds from addressing any popular assemblies.

When speak he did something both in the substance of what he said and his manner of saying it, showed the influence of unshared studies modifying and tempering the practical training of an active career. This along with his phraseology now and then was suggestive of the grounds whereon rested that imputation of a certain pedantry socially alleged against him by certain naval men of wholly practical cast captains who nevertheless would frankly concede that His Majesty's navy mustered

no more efficient officer of their grade than *Starry Vere*.

What he said was to this effect. Hitherto I have been but the witness little more and I should hardly think now to take another tone that of your coadjutor for the time did I not perceive in you—at the crisis too—a troubled hesitancy proceeding I doubt not from the clash of military duty with moral scruple—scruple vitalized by compassion. For the compassion how can I otherwise than share it. But mindful of paramount obligations I strive against scruples that may tend to enervate decision. Not, gentlemen that I hide from myself that the case is an exceptional one. Speculatively regarded it well might be referred to a jury of casuists. But for us here acting not as casuists or moralists it is a case practical and under martial law practically to be dealt with.

But your scruples do they move as in a dusk? Challenge them. Make them advance and declare themselves. Come now do they import something like this. If mindless of palliating circumstances we are bound to regard the death of the Master at arms as the prisoner's deed then does that deed constitute a capital crime whereof the penalty is a mortal one. But in natural justice is nothing but the prisoner's overt act to be considered? How can we adjudge to summary and shameful death a fellow-creature innocent before God and whom we feel to be so?—Does that state it aright? You sign sad assent. Well I too feel that the full force of that. It is Nature. But do these buttons that we wear attest that our allegiance is to Nature? No to the King. Though the ocean which is inviolate Nature primeval though this be the element where we move and have our being as sailors yet as the King's officers lies our duty in a sphere correspondingly natural? So little is that true that in receiving our commissions we in the most important regards ceased to be natural free agents. When war is declared are we the commissioned fighters previously consulted? We fight at command. If our judgements approve the war that is but coincidence. So in other particulars. So now. For suppose condemnation to follow these present proceedings. Would it be so much we ourselves that would condemn as it would be martial law operating through us? For that law and the rigour of it we are not responsible. Our avowed responsibility is in this. That however pitilessly that law may operate we nevertheless adhere to it and administer it.

But the exceptional in the matter moves the hearts within you. Even so too is mine moved. But let not warm hearts betray heads that should be cool. Ashore in a criminal case will an upright judge allow himself off the bench to be waylaid by some tender kinswoman of the accused seeking to touch

him with her tearful plea? Well the heart here denotes the feminine in man, is as that piteous woman, and hard though it be, she must here be ruled out.

He paused earnestly studying them for a moment then resumed.

But something in your aspect seems to urge that it is not solely the heart that moves in you, but also the conscience the private conscience. But tell me whether or not occupying the position we do private conscience should not yield to that imperial one formulated in the code under which alone we officially proceed?

Here the three men moved in their seats less convinced than agitated by the course of an argument troubling but the more the spontaneous conflict within.

Perceiving which the speaker paused for a moment then abruptly changing his tone went on.

To steady us a bit let us recur to the facts—In wartime at sea a man of war's man strikes his superior in grade and the blow kills. Apart from its effect the blow itself is according to the Articles of War a capital crime. Furthermore—

Ay Sir emotionally broke in the officer of marines in one sense it was. But surely Budd purposed neither mutiny nor homicide.

Surely not my good man. And before a court less arbitrary and more merciful than a martial one that plea would largely extenuate. At the Last Assizes it shall acquit. But how here? We proceed under the law of the Mutiny Act. In feature no child can resemble his father more than that Act resembles in spirit the thing from which it derives—War. In His Majesty's service—in this ship indeed—there are Englishmen forced to fight for the King against their will. Against their conscience, for aught we know. Though as their fellow creatures some of us may appreciate their position, yet as navy officers what reck we of it? Still less recks the enemy. Our impressed men he would fain cut down in the same swath with our volunteers. As regards the enemy's naval conscripts, some of whom may even share our own abhorrence of the regicidal French Directory it is the same on our side. War looks but to the frontage the appearance. And the Mutiny Act, War's child takes after the father. Budd's intent or non intent is nothing to the purpose.

But while put to it by those anxieties in you which I can not but respect I only repeat myself—while thus strangely we prolong proceedings that should be summary—the enemy may be sighted and an engagement result. We must do and one of two things must we do—condemn or let go.

Can we not convict and yet mitigate the penalty? asked the junior Lieutenant here speaking and falteringly, for the first.

Lieutenant, were that clearly lawful for us under

the circumstances consider the consequences of such clemency. The people (meaning the ship's company) have native sense most of them are familiar with our naval usage and tradition and how would they take it? Even could you explain to them—which our official position forbids—they long moulded by arbitrary discipline have not that kind of intelligent responsiveness that might qualify them to comprehend and discriminate. No to the people the foretopman's deed however it be worded in the announcement will be plain homicide committed in a flagrant act of mutiny. What penalty for that should follow they know. But it does not follow. *Why?* they will ruminate. You know what sailors are. Will they not revert to the recent outbreak at the *Noie*? Ay. They know the well founded alarm—the panic it struck throughout England. Your clement sentence they would account pusillanimous. They would think that we flinch that we are afraid of them—afraid of practising a lawful rigor singularly demanded at this juncture lest it should provoke new troubles. What shame to us such a conjecture on their part and how deadly to discipline. You see then whither prompted by duty and the law I steadfastly drive. But I beseech you my friends do not take me amiss. I feel as you do for this unfortunate boy. But did he know our hearts I take him to be of that generous nature that he would feel even for us on whom in this military necessity so heavy a compulsion is laid.

With that crossing the deck he resumed his place by the sashed port hole tacitly leaving the three to come to a decision. On the cabin's opposite side the troubled court sat silent. Loyal lieges plain and practical though at bottom they dissented from some points Captain Vere had put to them they were without the faculty hardly had the inclination to gainsay one whom they felt to be an earnest man, one too not less their superior in mind than in naval rank. But it is not improbable that even such of his words as were not without influence over them, less came home to them than his closing appeal to their instinct as sea-officers in the forethought he threw out as to the practical consequences of discipline, considering the unconfirmed tone of the fleet at the time should a man of war's man's violent killing at sea of a superior in grade be allowed to pass for aught else than a capital crime demanding prompt infliction of the penalty.

Not unlikely they were brought to something more or less akin to that harassed frame of mind which in the year 1842 actuated the commander of the U.S. brig of war *Somers* to resolve, under the so called Articles of War Articles modelled upon the English Mutiny Act to resolve upon the execution at sea of a midshipman and two petty officers as mutineers designing the seizure of the brig. Which

resolution was carried out though in a time of peace and within not many days sail of home. An act vindicated by a naval court of inquiry subsequently convened ashore. History, and here cited without comment. True the circumstances on board the *Somers* were different from those on board the *Indomitable*. But the urgency felt well warranted or otherwise was much the same.

Says a writer whom few know. Forty years after a battle it is easy for a non-combatant to reason about how it ought to have been fought. It is another thing personally and under fire to direct the fighting while involved in the obscuring smoke of it. Much so with respect to other emergencies involving considerations both practical and moral and when it is imperative promptly to act. The greater the fog the more it imperils the steamer and speed is put on though at the hazard of running somebody down. Little ween the snug card players in the cabin of the responsibilities of the sleepless man on the bridge.

In brief Billy Budd was formally convicted and sentenced to be hung at the yard arm in the early morning-watch it being now night. Otherwise as is customary in such cases the sentence would forthwith have been carried out. In war time on the field or in the fleet a mortal punishment decreed by a drum-head court—on the field sometimes decreed by but a nod from the General—follows without delay on the heel of conviction without appeal.

## 23

It was Captain Vere himself who of his own motion communicated the finding of the court to the prisoner for that purpose going to the compartment where he was in custody and bidding the marine there to withdraw for the time.

Beyond the communication of the sentence what took place at this interview was never known. But in view of the character of the twain briefly closeted in that state room each radically shaming in the rarer qualities of our nature—so rare indeed as to be all but incredible to average minds however much cultivated—some conjectures may be ventured.

It would have been in consonance with the spirit of Captain Vere should he on this occasion have concealed nothing from the condemned one—should he indeed have frankly disclosed to him the part he himself had played in bringing about the decision at the same time revealing his actuating motives. On Billy's side it is not improbable that such a confession would have been received in much the same spirit that prompted it. Not without a sort of joy indeed he might have appreciated the brave opinion of him implied in his Captain making such a confidant of him. Nor, as to the sentence itself

could he have been insensible that it was imparted to him as to one not afraid to die. Even more may have been Captain Vere in the end may have developed the passion sometimes latent under an exterior stoical or indifferent. He was old enough to have been Billy's father. The austere devotee of military duty letting himself melt back into what remains primeval in our formalized humanity may in the end have caught Billy to his heart even as Abraham may have caught young Isaac on the brink of resolutely offering him up in obedience to the exacting behest. But there is no telling the sacrament seldom if in any case revealed to the gadding world wherever under circumstances at all akin to those here attempted to be set forth two of great Nature's nobler order embrace. There is privacy at the time inviolable to the survivor and holy oblivion the sequel to each divine magnanimity, providentially covers all at last.

The first to encounter Captain Vere in act of leaving the compartment was the senior Lieutenant. The fact he beheld for the moment one expressive of the agony of the strong was to that officer though a man of fifty a startling revelation. That the condemned one suffered less than he who mainly had effected the condemnation was apparently indicated by the former's exclamation in the scene soon perforce to be touched upon.

## 24

Of a series of incidents within a brief term rapidly following each other the adequate narration may take up a term less brief especially if explanation or comment here and there seem requisite to the better understanding of such incidents. Between the entrance into the cabin of him who never left it alive and him who when he did leave it left it as one condemned to die between this and the closeted interview just given less than an hour and a half had elapsed. It was an interval long enough however to awaken speculations among no few of the ship's company as to what it was that could be detaining in the cabin the master at arms and the sailor for a rumor that both of them had been seen to enter it and neither of them had been seen to emerge. This rumor had got abroad upon the gun decks and in the tops the people of a great war ship being in one respect like villagers taking microscopic note of every outward movement or non-movement going on. When therefore in weather not at all tempestuous all hands were called in the second dog-watch a summons under such circumstances not usual in those hours the crew were not wholly unprepared for some announcement extraordinary one having connection too with the continued absence of the two men from their wonted haunts.



There was a moderate sea at the time and the moon newly risen and near to being at its full silvered the white spar deck wherever not blotted by the clear cut shadows horizontally thrown of fixtures and moving men. On either side the quarter deck the main guard under arms was drawn up and Captain Vere standing in his place surrounded by all the ward room officers addressed his men. In so doing his manner showed neither more nor less than that properly pertaining to his supreme position aboard his own ship. In clear terms and concise he told them what had taken place in the cabin that the master at arms was dead that he who had killed him had been already tried by a summary court and condemned to death and that the execution would take place in the early morning watch. The word *mutiny* was not named in what he said. He refrained too from making the occasion an opportunity for any preachment as to the maintenance of discipline thinking perhaps that under existing circumstances in the navy the consequence of violating discipline should be made to speak for itself.

Their captain's announcement was listened to by the throng of standing sailors in a dumbness like that of a seated congregation of believers in hell listening to the clergyman's announcement of his Calvinistic text.

At the close however a confused murmur went up. It began to wax. All but instantly, then, at a sign it was pierced and suppressed by shrill whistles of the Boatswain and his Mates piping down one wench.

To be prepared for burial Claggart's body was delivered to certain petty officers of his mess. And here, not to clog the sequel with lateral matters it may be added that at a suitable hour the Master at Arms was committed to the sea with every funeral honor properly belonging to his naval grade.

In this proceeding as in every public one growing out of the tragedy strict adherence to usage was observed. Nor in any point could it have been at all deviated from either with respect to Claggart or Billy Budd without begetting undesirable speculations in the ship's company sailors and more particularly men of war's men being of all men the greatest sticklers for usage.

For similar cause all communication between Captain Vere and the condemned one ended with the closeted interview already given, the latter being now surrendered to the ordinary routine preliminary to the end. This transfer under guard from the Captain's quarters was effected without unusual precautions—at least no visible ones.

If possible not to let the men so much as surmise that their officers anticipate aught amiss from them is the tacit rule in a military ship. And the more that

some sort of trouble should really be apprehended the more do the officers keep that apprehension to themselves though not the less unostentatious vigilance may be augmented.

In the present instance the sentry placed over the prisoner had strict orders to let no one have communication with him but the Chaplain. And certain unobtrusive measures were taken absolutely to insure this point.

## 25

In a seventy four of the old order the neck known as the upper gun deck was the one covered over by the spar deck which last though not without its armament was for the most part exposed to the weather. In general it was at all hours free from hammocks those of the crew swinging on the lower gun deck and berth deck the latter being not only a dormitory but also the place for the stowing of the sailors' bags and on both sides lined with the large chests or movable pantries of the many messes of the men.

On the starboard side of the *Indomitable's* upper gun deck behold Billy Budd under sentry lying prone in irons in one of the bays formed by the regular spacing of the guns comprising the batteries on either side. All these pieces were of the heavier calibre of that period. Mounted on lumbering wooden carriages they were hampered with cumbersome harness of breechen and strong side tackles for running them out. Guns and carriages together with the long rammers and shorter lintstocks lodged in loops overhead—all these as customary, were painted black and the heavy hempen breechens tarred to the same tint wore the like livery of the undertakers. In contrast with the funeral hue of these surroundings the pioneer sailor's exterior apparel white *jumper* and white duck trousers each more or less soiled dimly glimmered in the obscure light of the bay like a patch of discolored snow in early April lingering at some upland cave's black mouth. In effect he is already in his shroud or the garments that shall serve him in lieu of one. Over him but scarce illuminating him two battle lanterns swing from two massive beams of the deck above. Fed with the oil supplied by the war contractors (whose gains honest or otherwise are in every land an anticipated portion of the harvest of death) with flickering splashes of dirty yellow light they pollute the pale moonshine all but ineffectually struggling in obstructed flecks through the open ports from which the tompioned cannon protrude. Other lanterns at intervals serve but to bring out somewhat the obscurer bays which like small confessionals or side-chapels in a cathedral branch from the long dim vistaed broad aisle between the two batteries of that covered tier.



Such was the deck where now lay the Handsome Sailor. Through the rose tan of his complexion no pallor could have shown. It would have taken days of sequestration from the winds and the sun to have brought about the effacement of that. But the skeleton in the cheek bone at the point of its angle was just beginning delicately to be defined under the warm-tinted skin. In fevered hearts self contained some brief experiences devour our human tissue as secret fire in a ship's hold consumes cotton in the bale.

But now lying between the two guns as nipped in the vice of fate Billy's agony mainly proceeding from a generous young heart's virgin experience of the diabolical incarnate and effective in some men—the tension of that agony was over now. It survived not the something healing in the closeted interview with Captain Vere. Without movement he lay as in a trance. That adolescent expression previously noted as his taking on something akin to the look of a slumbering child in the cradle when the warm hearth glow of the still chamber at night plays on the dimples that at whiles mysteriously form in the cheek silently coming and going there. For now and then in the gyved one's trance a serene happy light born of some wandering reminiscence or dream would diffuse itself over his face and then wane away only anew to return.

The Chaplain coming to see him and finding him thus and perceiving no sign that he was conscious of his presence attentively regarded him for a space then slipping aside withdrew for the time, peradventure feeling that even he the minister of Christ though receiving his stipend from Mars had no consolation to proffer which could result in a peace transcending that which he beheld. But in the small hours he came again. And the prisoner now awake to his surroundings noticed his approach and civilly all but cheerfully welcomed him. But it was to little purpose that in the interview following the good man sought to bring Billy Budd to some godly understanding that he must die and at dawn True Billy himself freely referred to his death as a thing close at hand but it was something in the way that children will refer to death in general who yet among their other sports will play a funeral with hearse and mourners.

Not that like children Billy was incapable of conceiving what death really is. No but he was wholly without irrational fear of it a fear more prevalent in highly civilized communities than those so called barbarous ones which in all respects stand nearer to unadulterate Nature. And as elsewhere said a barbarian Billy radically was as much so for all the costume, as his countrymen the British captives living trophies, made to march in the Roman triumph of Germanicus. Quite as much so as those later bar-

barians young men probably and picked specimens among the earlier British converts to Christianity at least nominally such and taken to Rome (as today converts from lesser isles of the sea may be taken to London) of whom the Pope of that time admiring the strangeness of their personal beauty so unlike the Italian stamp their clear ruddy complexion and curled flaxen locks exclaimed Angles (meaning *English* the modern derivative) Angles do you call them? And is it because they look so like angels? Had it been later in time one would think that the Pope had in mind Fra Angelico's seraphs some of whom plucking apples in gardens of the Hesperides have the faint rose-bud complexion of the more beautiful English girls.

If in vain the good Chaplain sought to impress the young barbarian with ideas of death akin to those conveyed in the skull dial and cross-bones on old tombstones equally futile to all appearance were his efforts to bring home to him the thought of salvation and a Saviour. Billy listened but less out of awe or reverence perhaps than from a certain natural politeness doubtless at bottom regarding all that in much the same way that most mainers of his class take any discourse abstract or out of the common tone of the work a-day world. And this sailor's way of taking clerical discourse is not wholly unlike the way in which the pioneer of Christianity full of transcendent miracles was received long ago on tropic isles by any superior *savage* so called—a Tahitian servant of Captain Cook's time or shortly after that time. Out of natural courtesy he received but did not appropriate. It was like a gift placed in the palm of an outreached hand upon which the fingers do not close.

But the *Indomitable's* Chaplain was a discreet man possessing the good sense of a good heart. So he insisted not in his vocation here. At the instance of Captain Vere, a lieutenant had apprised him of pretty much everything as to Billy and since he felt that innocence was even a better thing than religion wherewith to go to Judgement he reluctantly withdrew but in his emotion not without first performing an act strange enough in an Englishman and under the circumstances yet more so in any regular priest. Stooping over he kissed on the fair cheek his fellow man, a felon in martial law, one who though on the confines of death he felt he could never convert to a dogma nor for all that did he fear for his future.

Marvel not that having been made acquainted with the young sailor's essential innocence (an interruption of heretic thought hard to suppress) the worthy man lifted not a finger to avert the doom of such a martyr to martial discipline. So to do would not only have been as idle as invoking the desert, but would also have been an audacious transgression of the

bounds of his function one as exactly prescribed to him by military law as that of the boatswain or any other naval officer. Bluntly put a chaplain is the minister of the Prince of Peace serving in the host of the God of War—Mars. As such he is as incongruous as that musket of Blücher etc. at Christmas. Why then is he there? Because he indirectly subserves the purpose attested by the cannon because too he lends the sanction of the religion of the meek to that which practically is the abrogation of everything but brute Force.

## 26

The night so luminous on the spar-deck but other wise on the cavernous ones below levels so like the tiered galleries in a coal mine—the luminous night passed away. But, like the prophet in the chariot disappearing in heaven and dropping his mantle to Elisha the withdrawing night transferred its pale robe to the breaking day. A meek shy light appeared in the East, where stretched a diaphanous fleece of white furrowed vapor. That light slowly waxed. Suddenly *eight bells* was struck aft responded to by one louder metallic stroke from forward. It was four o'clock in the morning. Instantly the silver whistles were heard summoning all hands to witness punishment. Up through the great hatchways rumbled with racks of heavy shot the watch below came pouring overspreading with the watch already on deck the space between the mainmast and foremast including that occupied by the capacious *launch* and the black booms tiered on either side of it boat and booms making a summit of observation for the powder boys and younger tars. A different group comprising one watch of topmen leaned over the rail of that sea balcony no small one in a seventy four looking down on the crowd below. Man or boy none spoke but in whisper, and few spoke at all. Captain Vere—as before, the central figure among the assembled commissioned officers—stood nigh the break of the poop deck facing forward. Just below him on the quarter-deck the mainmasts in full equipment were drawn up much as at the scene of the promulgated sentence.

At sea in the old time the execution by halter of a military sailor was generally from the fore yard. In the present instance for special reasons the main-yard was assigned. Under an arm of that weather or lee? yard the prisoner was presently brought up the Chaplain attending him. It was noted at the time and remarked upon afterwards, that in this final scene the good man evinced little or nothing of the perfunctory. Brief speech indeed he had with the condemned one but the genuine Gospel was less on his tongue than in his aspect and manner towards him. The final preparations personal to the

latter being speedily brought to an end by two boatswain's mates the consummation impended. Billy stood facing aft. At the penultimate moment his words his only ones words wholly unobstructed in the utterance were these—God bless Captain Vere! Syllables so unanticipated coming from one with the ignominious hemp about his neck—a conventional felon's benediction directed aft towards the quarters of honor syllables too delivered in the clear melody of a singing bird on the point of launching from the twig had a phenomenal effect not unenhanced by the rare personal beauty of the young sailor spiritualized now through late experiences so poignantly profound.

Without volition as it were as if indeed the ship's populace were but the vehicles of some vocal current electric with one voice from aloft and aloft came a resonant sympathetic echo—God bless Captain Vere! And yet at that instant Billy alone must have been in their hearts even as he was in their eyes.

At the pronounced words and the spontaneous echo that voluminously rebounded them Captain Vere either through stoic self control or a sort of momentary paralysis induced by emotional shock stood erectly rigid as a musket in the ship armorer's rack.

The hull deliberately recovering from the periodic roll to leeward was just regaining an even keel when the last signal a preconcerted dumb one was given. At the same moment it chanced that the vaporous fleece hanging low in the East, was shot through with a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision and simultaneously therewith watched by the wedged mass of upturned faces Billy ascended and ascending took the full rose of the dawn.

In the pinioned figure, arrived at the yard end to the wonder of all no motion was apparent none save that created by the ship's motion in moderate weather so majestic in a great ship ponderously cannoned.

## 27

## A Digression

When some days afterward in reference to the singularity just mentioned the Purser a rather ruddy rotund person more accurate as an accountant than profound as a philosopher said at mess to the Surgeon. What testimony to the force lodged in will power the latter saturnine, spare and tall, one in whom a discreet causticity went along with a manner less genial than polite, replied. Your pardon Mr. Purser. In a hanging scientifically conducted—and under special orders I myself directed how

Budd's was to be effected—any movement following the completed suspension and originating in the body suspended, such movement indicates mechanical spasm in the muscular system. Hence the absence of that is no more attributable to will power as you call it than to horse power—begging your pardon.

But this muscular spasm you speak of is not that in a degree more or less invariable in these cases?

Assuredly so, Mr Purser.

How then, my good sir, do you account for its absence in this instance?

Mr Purser, it is clear that your sense of the singularity in this matter equals not mine. You account for it by what you call will power, a term not yet included in the lexicon of science. For me I do not, with my present knowledge pretend to account for it at all. Even should we assume the hypothesis that at the first touch of the halyards the action of Budd's heart, intensified by extraordinary emotion at its climax, abruptly stopt—much like a watch when in carelessly winding it up you strain at the finish thus snapping the chain—even under that hypothesis how account for the phenomenon that followed?

You admit then that the absence of spasmodic movement was phenomenal.

It was phenomenal, Mr Purser, in the sense that it was an appearance the cause of which is not immediately to be assigned.

But tell me, my dear Sir, pertinaciously continued the other, was the man's death effected by the halter or was it a species of euthanasia?

*Euthanasia*, Mr Purser, is something like your *will-power*. I doubt its authenticity as a scientific term—begging your pardon again. It is at once imaginative and metaphysical—in short, Greek. But abruptly changing his tone, there is a case in the sick bay that I do not care to leave to my assistants. Beg your pardon, but excuse me. And rising from the mess he formally withdrew.

## 28

The silence at the moment of execution and for a moment or two continuing thereafter, a silence but emphasized by the regular wash of the sea against the hull or the flutter of a sail caused by the helmsman's eyes being tempted astray, this emphasized silence was gradually disturbed by a sound not easily to be verbally rendered. Whoever has heard the freshest wave of a torrent suddenly swelled by pouring showers in tropical mountains, showers not shared by the plain, whoever has heard the first muffled murmur of its sloping advance through precipitous woods may form some conception of the sound now heard. The seeming remoteness of its source was because of its murmurous indistinctness

since it came from close by, even from the men massed on the ship's open deck. Being inarticulate it was dubious in significance further than it seemed to indicate some capricious revulsion of thought or feeling such as mobs ashore are liable to in the present instance possibly implying a sullen revocation on the men's part of their involuntary echoing of Billy's benediction. But ere the murmur had time to wax into clamor it was met by a strategic command, the more telling that it came with abrupt unexpectedness.

Pipe down the starboard watch, Boatswain, and see that they go.

Shrill as the shriek of the sea-hawk, the whistles of the Boatswain and his Mates pierced that ominous low sound, dissipating it and yielding to the mechanism of discipline, the throng was thinned by one half. For the remainder, most of them were set to temporary employments connected with trimming the yards and so forth, business readily to be got up to serve occasion by any officer of the deck.

Now each proceeding that follows a mortal sentence pronounced at sea by a drum-head court is characterized by promptitude, not perceptibly merging into hurry, though bordering that. The hammock, the one which had been Billy's bed when alive, having already been ballasted with shot and otherwise prepared to serve for his canvas coffin, the last offices of the sea undertakers, the Sail Maker's Mats were now speedily completed. When everything was in readiness a second call for all hands made necessary by the strategic movement before mentioned was sounded and now to witness burial.

The details of this closing formality it needs not to give. But when the tilted plank let slide its freight into the sea, a second strange human murmur was heard, blended now with another inarticulate sound proceeding from certain larger sea fowl whose attention having been attracted by the peculiar commotion in the water resulting from the heavy sloped dive of the shotted hammock into the sea, flew screaming to the spot. So near the hull did they come that the stidor or bony creak of their grunt, double-jointed pinions was audible. As the ship under light airs passed on, leaving the burial spot astern, they still kept circling it low down with the moving shadow of their outstretched wings and the croaked requiem of their cries.

Upon sailors as superstitious as those of the age preceding ours, men of war's men too who had just beheld the prodigy of repose in the form suspended in air and now foundering in the deeps to such mariners the action of the sea fowl though dictated by mere animal greed for prey was big with no prosaic significance. An uncertain movement begun among them in which some encroachment was made. It was tolerated but for a moment. For suddenly the

drum beat to quarters which familiar sound happening at least twice every day had upon the present occasion a signal peremptoriness in it. True martial discipline long continued superinduces in average man a sort of impulse of docility whose operation at the official sound of command much resembles in its promptitude the effect of an instinct.

The drum beat dissolved the multitude, distributing most of them along the batteries of the two covered gun decks. There as wont the guns crews stood by their respective cannon erect and silent. In due course the First Officer sword under arm and standing in his place on the quarter deck formally received the successive reports of the sworded Lieutenants commanding the sections of batteries below the last of which reports being made the summed report he delivered with the customary salute to the Commander. All this occupied time which in the present case was the object of beating to quarters at an hour prior to the customary one. That such variance from usage was authorized by an officer like Captain Vere a martinet as some deemed him was evidence of the necessity for unusual action implied in what he deemed to be temporarily the mood of his men. With mankind he would say forms measured forms are everything and that is the import couched in the story of Orpheus with his lyre spell binding the wild denizens of the wood. And this he once applied to the disruption of forms going on across the Channel and the consequences thereof.

At this unwonted muster at quarters all proceeded as at the regular hour. The band on the quarter deck played a sacred air. After which the Chaplain went through the customary morning service. That done, the drum beat the retreat and toned by music and religious rites subserving the discipline and purpose of war the men in their wonted orderly manner, dispersed to the places allotted them when not at the guns.

And now it was full day. The fleece of low hanging vapor had vanished licked up by the sun that late had so glorified it. And the circumambient air in the clearness of its serenity was like smooth white marble in the polished block not yet removed from the marble-dealer's yard.

## 29

The symmetry of form attainable in pure fiction can not so readily be achieved in a narration essentially having less to do with fable than with fact. Truth uncompromisingly told will always have its ragged edges hence the conclusion of such a narration is apt to be less finished than an architectural final.

How it fared with the Handsome Sailor during the year of the Great Mutiny has been faithfully given

But though properly the story ends with his life something in way of sequel will not be amiss. Three brief chapters will suffice.

In the general rechristening under the Directorate of the craft originally forming the navy of the French monarchy the *St. Louis* line of battle ship was named the *Atheiste*. Such a name like some other substituted ones in the Revolutionary fleet while proclaiming the infidel audacity of the ruling power was yet though not so intended to be the aptest name if one consider it ever given to a war ship far more so indeed than the *Devastation*, the *Erebus* (the *Hell*) and similar names bestowed upon fighting ships.

On the return passage to the English fleet from the detached cruise during which occurred the events already recorded the *Indomitable* fell in with the *Atheiste*. An engagement ensued during which Captain Vere in the act of putting his ship alongside the enemy with a view of throwing his boarders across her bulwarks was hit by a musket ball from a port hole of the enemy's main cabin. More than disabled he dropped to the deck and was carried below to the same cock pit where some of his men already lay. The senior Lieutenant took command. Under him the enemy was finally captured and though much crippled was by rare good fortune successfully taken into Gibraltar an English port not very distant from the scene of the fight. There Captain Vere with the rest of the wounded was put ashore. He lingered for some days but the end came. Unhappily he was cut off too early for the Nile and Trafalgar. The spirit that spite its philosophic austerity may yet have indulged in the most secret of all passions ambition, never attained to the fulness of fame.

Not long before death while lying under the influence of that magical drug which soothing the physical frame mysteriously operates on the subtler element in man, he was heard to mummur words inexplicable to his attendant—Billy Budd. Billy Budd. That these were not the accents of remorse would seem clear from what the attendant said to the *Indomitable's* senior officer of marines who as the most reluctant to condemn of the members of the drum head court too well knew though here he kept the knowledge to himself who Billy Budd was.

## 30

Some few weeks after the execution among other matters under the head of *News from the Mediterranean* there appeared in a rival chronicle of the time an authorized weekly publication an account of the affair. It was doubtless for the most part written in good faith though the medium, partly rumor through which the facts must have reached the

writer served to deflect and in part falsify them. The account was as follows—

On the tenth of the last month a deplorable occurrence took place on board H M S *Indomitable*. John Claggart, the ship's master-at-arms, discovering that some sort of plot was incipient among an inferior section of the ship's company, and that the ringleader was one William Budd, he Claggart in the act of arraigning the man before the Captain was vindictively stabbed to the heart by the suddenly drawn sheath knife of Budd.

The deed and the implement employed, sufficiently suggest that though mustered into the service under an English name, the assassin was no English man, but one of those aliens adopting English cognomens whom the present extraordinary necessities of the Service have caused to be admitted into it in considerable numbers.

The enormity of the crime and the extreme depravity of the criminal appear the greater in view of the character of the victim, a middle-aged man, respectable and discreet, belonging to that minor official grade, the petty officers, upon whom, as none know better than the commissioned gentlemen, the efficiency of His Majesty's navy so largely depends. His function was a responsible one, at once onerous and thankless, and his fidelity in it the greater because of his strong patriotic impulse. In this instance, as in so many other instances in these days, the character of this unfortunate man signally refutes, if refutation were needed, that peevish saying attributed to the late Dr. Johnson, that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.

The criminal paid the penalty of his crime. The promptitude of the punishment has proved salutary. Nothing amiss is now apprehended aboard H M S *Indomitable*.

The above appearing in a publication now long ago superannuated and forgotten, is all that hitherto has stood in human record to attest what manner of men respectively were John Claggart and Billy Budd.

## 31

Everything is for a term remarkable in navies. Any tangible object associated with some striking incident of the service is converted into a monument. The spar from which the Foretopman was suspended, was for some few years kept trace of by the blue-jackets. Their knowledge followed it from ship to dock-yard, and again from dock-yard to ship, still pursuing it even when at last reduced to a mere dock-yard boom. To them a chip of it was as a piece of the Cross. Ignorant though they were of the secret facts of the tragedy, and not thinking but that the penalty was somehow unavoidably inflicted from the naval point of view, for all that they instinctively

felt that Billy was a sort of man as incapable of mutiny as of wilful murder. They recalled the fresh young image of the Handsome Sailor, that face never deformed by a sneer or subtler vile freak of the heart within. Their impression of him was doubtless deepened by the fact that he was gone, and in a measure mysteriously gone. On the gun-decks of the *Indomitable*, the general estimate of his nature and its unconscious simplicity eventually found rude utterance from another foretopman, one of his own watch, gifted, as some sailors are, with an artless poetic temperament. The tarry hands made some lines which, after circulating among the shipboard crew for a while, finally got rudely printed at Ports-mouth as a ballad. The title given to it was the sailor's

## BILLY IN THE DARBIES

Good of the Chaplain to enter Lone Bay  
And down on his marrow bones here and pray  
For the likes just o' me Billy Budd—But look  
Through the port comes the moon shunc astay!  
It tips the guards' cutlas and silvers this nook,  
But twill die in the dawning of Billy's last day  
A jewel block they'll make of me tomorrow  
Pendant pearl from the yard arm end  
Like the ear-drop I gave to Bristol Molly—  
O' tis me not the sentence they'll suspend  
Ay, Ay, all is up, and I must up too  
Early in the morning aloft from aloof  
On an empty stomach, now, never it would do  
They'll give me a nibble—bit o' biscuit ere I go  
Sure a messmate will reach me the last parting cup  
But turning heads away from the hoist and the  
belay  
Heaven knows who will have the running of me up!  
No pipe to those halyards—But aren't it all sham?  
A blur's in my eyes, it is dreaming that I am  
A hatchet to my hawser? all adrift to go?  
The drum roll to grog, and Billy never know?  
But Donald he has promised to stand by the plank  
So I'll shake a friendly hand ere I sink  
But—no! It is dead then I'll be, come to think—  
I remember Taff the Welshman when he sunk  
And his cheek it was like the budding pink  
But me they'll lash me in hammock, drop me deep  
Fathoms down, fathoms down, how I'll dream fast  
asleep  
I feel it stealing now, Sentry, are you there?  
Just ease this darbies at the wrist  
And roll me over fair,  
I am sleepy, and the oozy weeds about me twist

## END OF BOOK

April 19th  
1891

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1 What points does *Billy Budd* have in common with *Oedipus Rex* and *Othello*?

2 What do you consider the possible motives of Claggart to be aside from those specifically assigned by Melville? Do you think that Claggart is a sufficiently motivated character?

3 What does old Dansker represent in the story?

4 How does Melville go about the matter of assigning symbolic value to his characters? Does he overdo his own comment? What do you think of his style and approach?

5 What is the significance of the statement at the end of the novel that Billy Budd's body hangs perfectly still in defiance of the natural tendency for reflex movements?

6 It is suggested in the novel that Captain Vere is Billy Budd's father. What is your understanding of this suggestion? What is the significance of the implied father-son relation? Can you find any symbolic meaning in the concept of the son and the father? In what ways is Captain Vere's relationship to the crew that of father? What is the concept of Captain Vere's authority in this respect?

7 How does the phrase "There but for the grace of God go I" apply to the reader's reaction to Billy's story?

8 If *Billy Budd* is to be considered a tragedy, the hero should have a tragic flaw. What is Billy Budd's flaw?

9 It has been argued that the real hero of the novel is Captain Vere. To what extent is this argument correct and what evidence would you bring to bear to uphold it?

10 Why has Melville chosen a ship as the locale for his tragedy?

11 Budd, Claggart, and Vere all die. In what ways are their deaths different?

12 How do you account for Vere's deathbed murmur "Billy Budd, Billy Budd"? What relation does this have to Billy's dying remark?



# The Metamorphosis

*Franz Kafka*

Franz Kafka, although Czechoslovakian by birth and residence, wrote in German and his work constitutes one of the most important contributions of the century to German letters. His life was a tragic one, haunted by poverty and illness and his total work was very small. Very little of what he wrote was published during his lifetime, and if the provisions of his will had been carried out, all his manuscripts would have been destroyed

after his death. His friend and executor, Max Brod, conscious of the great literary worth of Kafka's writings, took it upon himself not only to preserve the manuscripts but to edit and publish them. Since the appearance of the first definitive German edition, Kafka's works have been translated into all the major languages and his reputation is such that no one would doubt that he belongs in the very topmost rank of twentieth-century men of letters.

A tremendous amount of critical material has appeared on Kafka during the past ten years, and the interested student will have no trouble in finding a wide variety of interpretation, exegesis, and commentary in the leading literary periodicals of the United States, France, and Great Britain, as well as a number of excellent book-length studies. The mere existence of so large a body of criticism testifies to the appreciation which the modern world has of Kafka, an appreciation which is in no small measure due to the peculiar area of his work.

Generally, Kafka is concerned with the nightmarish quality of the contemporary world and with the loneliness of the modern man who finds himself isolated from society by the collapse of former values and his inability to find meaningful new ones. Kafka's heroes search for certainty but always fail to find it in any satisfactory way. A frustration hangs over every one of Kafka's protagonists who cannot attach themselves to anything stable, no matter how hard they try and who end up always as the passive pawns of systematic orders whose bases and assumptions they cannot even begin to fathom. Often their dilemmas are humorous, often their problems satirize the endless red tape of bureaucratic systems, but underneath, Kafka is always calling attention to the alienation of man from his fellows and underscoring the horrible, cold terror of not knowing where one is, where one is going, or why.

Today, in a world beset with uncertainty, doubt, fear, and the constant imminence of terror and destruction, Kafka's world seems amazingly true to experience, and the quest of his heroes reflects with painful accuracy the situation of modern man. It is perhaps for this reason that his works have taken on such importance of latter years. As in the case of Melville, it often requires time for the state of the world to catch up with the comments of its leading geniuses. At any rate, it is not possible to read the simple, stark, and classical prose of Kafka nor to follow the journeys of his men, women, and creatures without the chill that comes from self-recognition.

The story *The Metamorphosis* is one of the few complete stories which Kafka left. Its method is typical of the generality of Kafka's work: it starts with an outrageous assumption and proceeds normally from that point on. Essentially, there is nothing out of the ordinary in the story except the fact that Gregor Samsa has changed overnight into a cockroach. In all other respects, both Samsa and the working out of the story are completely normal. Here, of course, Kafka is symbolizing in a dramatic way the fact of alienation and difference.

Samsa is suddenly—through no fault of his own but by virtue of the operation of forces which he neither suspects understands nor controls but which for all we know have a rationale if only we knew what it was—separated from the rest of his fellow men and especially from those closest to him his family. The point is that Samsa has been thrown out of the regular orbit of life he becomes an alien the only one of his kind. His desire is of course for reabsorption into the human condition he wants to regain his place and reassume his status just as K the land surveyor in *The Castle* (also by Kafka) wants to have security in his job. Samsa's basic illness is not that of being a cockroach which only implies certain inconveniences but that of being different and unwanted in short his problem is that of a lonely and isolated man. What has happened to Samsa as he soon discovers is that the old values upon which he depended and which he naturally assumed to be fixed have changed to a degree where contrary to normal expectation he cannot rely for comfort or succor upon even the people who in ordinary society stood closest to him—his family. He finds that he is not only an outcast from the larger world but is an alien in his own home as well and that he fills his parents with repugnance rather than love. Everything upon which he had learned to rely and of which as a salesman he was so integral a part has now lost all meaning despite the fact that except for the external body of a cockroach Samsa is still the same person. It is not odd that he should question as Kafka questions the fundamental validity of relations which disintegrate so rapidly in the face of external change. Samsa's mere presence is such as to enrage his father who at one point tries to kill him in a perversion of the father-son relationship.

It is in this preoccupation with the status of man with respect to certainty that *The Metamorphosis* typifies Kafka's work and typifies the moral problem of the century. The story must not be read of course in a literal sense but as an example in dramatic form of certain basic issues. As in all allegorical and symbolic writing the ultimate meaning of the story is not clear and there is no finally right interpretation. The function of the story is to disclose aspects of our world to ourselves to provide illumination of a deep and tragic human problem perhaps to suggest by implication what can be done if indeed anything can be done.

# I

As GREGOR SAMSA awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect. He was lying on his hard, as it were armor-plated, back and when he lifted his head a little he could see his dome-like brown belly divided into stiff arched segments on top of which the bed-quilt could hardly keep in position and was about to slide off completely. His numerous legs, which were pitifully thin compared to the rest of his bulk, waved helplessly before his eyes.

What has happened to me? he thought. It was no dream. His room a regular human bedroom only rather too small, lay quiet between the four familiar walls. Above the table on which a collection of cloth samples was unpacked and spread out—Samsa was a commercial traveler—hung the picture which he had recently cut out of an illustrated magazine and put into a pretty gilt frame. It showed a lady with a fur cap on and a fur stole sitting upright and holding out to the spectator a huge fur muff into which the whole of her forearm had vanished!

Gregor's eyes turned next to the window and the overcast sky—one could hear rain drops beating on the window gutter—made him quite melancholy. What about sleeping a little longer and forgetting all this nonsense he thought but it could not be done, for he was accustomed to sleep on his right side and in his present condition he could not turn himself over. However violently he forced himself towards his right side he always rolled on to his back again. He tried it at least a hundred times, shutting his eyes to keep from seeing his struggling legs, and only desisted when he began to feel in his side a faint dull ache he had never experienced before.

Oh God he thought what an exhausting job I've picked on! Traveling about day in day out. It's much more irritating work than doing the actual business in the office, and on top of that there's the trouble of constant traveling of worrying about train connections the bed and irregular meals casual acquaintances that are always new and never become intimate friends. The devil take it all! He felt a slight itching up on his belly slowly pushed himself on his back nearer to the top of the bed so that he could lift his head more easily identified the itching place which was surrounded by many small white spots the nature of which he could not understand and made to touch it with a leg but drew the leg back immediately, for the contact made a cold shiver run through him.

He slid down again into his former position. This getting up early, he thought makes one quite stupid. A man needs his sleep. Other commercials live like harem women. For instance when I come back to the hotel of a morning to write up the orders I've got these others are only sitting down to breakfast. Let me just try that with my chief. I'd be sacked on the spot. Anyhow that might be quite a good thing for me who can tell? If I didn't have to hold my hand because of my parents I'd have given notice long ago, I'd have gone to the chief and told him exactly what I think of him. That would knock him endways from his desk! It's a queer way of doing too this sitting on high at a desk and talking down to employees, especially when they have to come quite near because the chief is hard of hearing.



Well, there's still hope once I've saved enough money to pay back my parents' debts to him—that should take another five or six years—I'll do it without fail. I'll cut myself completely loose then. For the moment, though, I'd better get up, since my train goes at five.

He looked at the alarm clock ticking on the chest. Heavenly Father! he thought. It was half past six o'clock and the hands were quietly moving on. It was even past the half hour. It was getting on toward a quarter to seven. Had the alarm clock not gone off? From the bed one could see that it had been properly set for four o'clock; of course it must have gone off. Yes, but was it possible to sleep quietly through that ear-splitting noise? Well, he had not slept quietly, yet apparently all the more soundly for that. But what was he to do now? The next train went at seven o'clock to catch that he would need to hurry like mad and his samples weren't even packed up, and he himself wasn't feeling particularly fresh and active. And even if he did catch the train, he wouldn't avoid a row with the chief, since the firm's porter would have been waiting for the five o'clock train and would have long since reported his failure to turn up. The porter was a creature of the chief's spineless and stupid. Well, supposing he were to say he was sick? But that would be most unpleasant and would look suspicious, since during his five years' employment he had not been ill once. The chief himself would be sure to come with the sick-insurance doctor, would reproach his parents with their son's laziness and would cut all excuses short by referring to the insurance doctor, who of course regarded all mankind as perfectly healthy malingerers. And would he be so far wrong on this occasion? Gregor really felt quite well, apart from a drowsiness that was utterly superfluous after such a long sleep and he was even unusually hungry.

As all this was running through his mind at top speed without his being able to decide to leave his bed—the alarm clock had just struck a quarter to seven—there came a cautious tap at the door behind the head of his bed. Gregor, said a voice—it was his mother's—it's a quarter to seven. Hadn't you a train to catch? That gentle voice! Gregor had a shock as he heard his own voice answering hers unmistakably his own voice, it was true, but with a persistent horrible twittering squeak behind it like an undertone, that left the words in their clear shape only for the first moment and then rose up reverberating round them to destroy their sense, so that one could not be sure one had heard them rightly. Gregor wanted to answer at length and explain everything, but in the circumstances he confined himself to saying: Yes, yes, thank you, Mother, I'm getting up now. The wooden door between them must have kept the change in his voice from being

noticeable outside for his mother contented herself with this statement and shuffled away. Yet this brief exchange of words had made the other members of the family aware that Gregor was still in the house as they had not expected and at one of the side doors his father was already knocking gently yet with his fist. Gregor! Gregor! he called, what's the matter with you? And after a little while he called again in a deeper voice: Gregor! Gregor! At the other side door his sister was saying in a low plaintive tone: Gregor? Aren't you well? Are you needing anything? He answered them both at once:

I'm just ready and did his best to make his voice sound as normal as possible by enunciating the words very clearly and leaving long pauses between them. So his father went back to his breakfast but his sister whispered: Gregor, open the door, do. However, he was not thinking of opening the door, and felt thankful for the prudent habit he had acquired in traveling of locking all doors during the night, even at home.

His immediate intention was to get up quietly without being disturbed, to put on his clothes and above all eat his breakfast and only then to consider what else was to be done, since in bed he was well aware his meditations would come to no sensible conclusion. He remembered that often enough in bed he had felt small aches and pains, probably caused by awkward postures which had proved purely imaginary once he got up, and he looked forward eagerly to seeing this morning's delusions gradually fall away. That the change in his voice was nothing but the precursor of a severe chill, a standing ailment of commercial travelers, he had not the least possible doubt.

To get rid of the quilt was quite easy; he had only to inflate himself a little and it fell off by itself. But the next move was difficult, especially because he was so uncommonly broad. He would have needed arms and hands to hoist himself up; instead he had only the numerous little legs which never stopped waving in all directions and which he could not control in the least. When he tried to bend one of them it was the first to stretch itself straight and did he succeed at last in making it do what he wanted, all the other legs meanwhile waved the more wildly in a high degree of unpleasant agitation. But what's the use of lying idle in bed, said Gregor to himself.

He thought that he might get out of bed with the lower part of his body first, but this lower part, which he had not yet seen and of which he could form no clear conception, proved too difficult to move. It shifted so slowly and when finally, almost wild with annoyance, he gathered his forces together and thrust out recklessly, he had miscalculated the direction and bumped heavily against the lower end of the bed, and the stinging pain he felt informed

him that precisely this lower part of his body was at the moment probably the most sensitive

So he tried to get the top part of himself out first and cautiously moved his head towards the edge of the bed. That proved easy enough and despite its breadth and mass the bulk of his body at last slowly followed the movement of his head. Still when he finally got his head free over the edge of the bed he felt too scared to go on advancing for after all if he let himself fall in this way it would take a miracle to keep his head from being injured. And at all costs he must not lose consciousness now precisely now he would rather stay in bed.

But when after a repetition of the same efforts he lay in his former position again sighing and watched his little legs struggling against each other more wildly than ever if that were possible and saw no way of bringing any order into this arbitrary confusion he told himself again that it was impossible to stay in bed and that the most sensible course was to risk everything for the smallest hope of getting away from it. At the same time he did not forget meanwhile to remind himself that cool reflection the coolest possible was much better than desperate resolves. In such moments he focused his eyes as sharply as possible on the window but unfortunately the prospect of the morning fog which muffled even the other side of the narrow street brought him little encouragement and comfort.

Seven o'clock already he said to himself when the alarm clock chimed again seven o'clock already and still such a thick fog. And for a little while he lay quiet breathing lightly as if perhaps expecting such complete repose to restore all things to their real and normal condition.

But then he said to himself Before it strikes a quarter past seven I must be quite out of this bed, without fail. Anyhow by that time someone will have come from the office to ask for me since it opens before seven. And he set himself to rocking his whole body at once in a regular rhythm with the idea of swinging it out of the bed. If he tipped himself out in that way he could keep his head from injury by lifting it at an acute angle when he fell. His back seemed to be hard and was not likely to suffer from a fall on the carpet. His biggest worry was the loud crash he would not be able to help making which would probably cause anxiety if not terror behind all the doors. Still, he must take the risk.

When he was already half out of the bed—the new method was more a game than an effort for he needed only to hitch himself across by rocking to and fro—it struck him how simple it would be if he could get help. Two strong people—he thought of his father and the servant girl—would be amply sufficient, they would only have to thrust their arms

under his convex back lever him out of the bed, bend down with their burden and then be patient enough to let him turn himself right over on to the floor, where it was to be hoped his legs would then find their proper function. Well ignoring the fact that the doors were all locked ought he really to call for help? In spite of his misery he could not suppress a smile at the very idea of it.

He had got so far that he could barely keep his equilibrium when he locked himself strongly and he would have to nerve himself very soon for the final decision since in five minutes time it would be a quarter past seven—when the front door bell rang.

That's someone from the office he said to himself and grew almost rigid while his little legs only jugged about all the faster. For a moment everything stayed quiet. They're not going to open the door said Gregor to himself catching at some kind of irrational hope. But then of course the servant girl went as usual to the door with her heavy tread and opened it. Gregor needed only to hear the first good morning of the visitor to know immediately who it was—the chief clerk himself. What a fate to be condemned to work for a firm where the smallest omission at once gave rise to the gravest suspicion! Were all employees in a body nothing but scoundrels was there not among them one single loyal devoted man who, had he wasted only an hour or so of the firm's time in a morning was so tormented by conscience as to be driven out of his mind and actually incapable of leaving his bed? Wouldn't it really have been sufficient to send an apprentice to inquire—if any inquiry were necessary at all—did the chief clerk himself have to come and thus indicate to the entire family an innocent family that this suspicious circumstance could be investigated by no one less versed in affairs than himself? And more through the agitation caused by these reflections than through any act of will Gregor swung himself out of bed with all his strength. There was a loud thump but it was not really a crash. His fall was broken to some extent by the carpet his back too was less stiff than he thought and so there was merely a dull thud, not so very startling. Only he had not lifted his head carefully enough and had hit it he turned it and rubbed it on the carpet in pain and irritation.

That was something falling down in there said the chief clerk in the next room to the left. Gregor tried to suppose to himself that something like what had happened to him today might some day happen to the chief clerk one really could not deny that it was possible. But as if in brusque reply to this supposition the chief clerk took a couple of firm steps in the next door room and his patent leather boots creaked. From the right hand room his sister was whispering to inform him of the situation.

Gregor the chief clerk's here. I know," muttered Gregor to himself, but he didn't dare to make his voice loud enough for his sister to hear it.

Gregor said his father now from the left hand room: the chief clerk has come and wants to know why you didn't catch the early train. We don't know what to say to him. Besides, he wants to talk to you in person. So open the door, please. He will be good enough to excuse the untidiness of your room. Good morning, Mr. Samsa, the chief clerk was calling amiably meanwhile. He's not well, said his mother to the visitor, while his father was still speaking through the door, he's not well, sir, believe me. What else would make him miss a train! The boy thinks about nothing but his work. It makes me almost cross the way he never goes out in the evenings; he's been here the last eight days and has stayed at home every single evening. He just sits there quietly at the table reading a newspaper or looking through railway timetables. The only amusement he gets is doing fretwork. For instance, he spent two or three evenings cutting out a little picture frame, you would be surprised to see how pretty it is; it's hanging in his room, you'll see it in a minute when Gregor opens the door. I must say I'm glad you've come, sir, we should never have got him to unlock the door by ourselves, he's so obstinate, and I'm sure he's unwell, though he wouldn't have it to be so this morning. I'm just coming, said Gregor slowly and carefully, not moving an inch for fear of losing one word of the conversation. I can't think of any other explanation, madam, said the chief clerk, I hope it's nothing serious. Although on the other hand I must say that we men of business—fortunately or unfortunately—very often simply have to ignore any slight indisposition, since business must be attended to. Well, can the chief clerk come in now? asked Gregor's father impatiently, again knocking on the door. No, said Gregor. In the left hand room a painful silence followed this refusal, in the right hand room his sister began to sob.

Why didn't his sister join the others? She was probably newly out of bed and hadn't even begun to put on her clothes yet. Well, why was she crying? Because he wouldn't get up and let the chief clerk in, because he was in danger of losing his job, and because the chief would begin dunning his parents again for the old debts? Surely these were things one didn't need to worry about for the present. Gregor was still at home and not in the least thinking of deserting the family. At the moment, true, he was lying on the carpet and no one who knew the condition he was in could seriously expect him to admit the chief clerk. But for such a small discourtesy, which could plausibly be explained away somehow later on, Gregor could hardly be dismissed on the

spot. And it seemed to Gregor that it would be much more sensible to leave him in peace for the present than to trouble him with tears and entreaties. Still, of course, their uncertainty bewildered them all and excused their behavior.

Mr. Samsa, the chief clerk called now in a louder voice: what's the matter with you? Here you are barricading yourself in your room, giving only yes and no for answers, causing your parents a lot of unnecessary trouble and neglecting—I mention this only in passing—neglecting your business duties in an incredible fashion. I am speaking here in the name of your parents and of your chief, and I beg you quite seriously to give me an immediate and precise explanation. You amaze me, you amaze me. I thought you were a quiet, dependable person, and now all at once you seem bent on making a disgraceful exhibition of yourself. The chief did hint to me early this morning a possible explanation for your disappearance—with reference to the cash payments that were entrusted to you recently—but I almost pledged my solemn word of honor that this could not be so. But now that I see how incredibly obstinate you are, I no longer have the slightest desire to take your part at all. And your position in the firm is not so unassailable. I came with the intention of telling you all this in private, but since you are wasting my time so needlessly, I don't see why your parents shouldn't hear it too. For some time past your work has been most unsatisfactory; this is not the season of the year for a business boom, of course, we admit that, but a season of the year for doing no business at all, that does not exist, Mr. Samsa, must not exist.

But, sir, cried Gregor, beside himself and in his agitation forgetting everything else, I'm just going to open the door this very minute. A slight illness, an attack of giddiness, has kept me from getting up. I'm still lying in bed. But I feel all right again. I'm getting out of bed now. Just give me a moment or two longer! I'm not quite so well as I thought. But I'm all right, really. How a thing like that can suddenly strike one down! Only last night I was quite well, my parents can tell you, or rather I did have a slight presentiment. I must have showed some sign of it. Why didn't I report it at the office? But one always thinks that an indisposition can be got over without staying in the house. Oh, sir, do spare my parents! All that you're reproaching me with now has no foundation; no one has ever said a word to me about it. Perhaps you haven't looked at the last orders I sent in. Anyhow, I can still catch the eight o'clock train. I'm much the better for my few hours' rest. Don't let me detain you here, sir. I'll be attending to business very soon, and do be good enough to tell the chief so, and to make my excuses to him!

And while all this was tumbling out pell mell and Gregor hardly knew what he was saying he had reached the chest quite easily perhaps because of the practice he had had in bed and was now trying to lever himself upright by means of it. He meant actually to open the door actually to show himself and speak to the chief clerk he was eager to find out what the others after all their insistence, would say at the sight of him. If they were horrified then the responsibility was no longer his and he could stay quiet. But if they took it calmly then he had no reason either to be upset and could really get to the station for the eight o'clock train if he hurried. At first he slipped down a few times from the polished surface of the chest but at length with a last heave he stood upright he paid no more attention to the pains in the lower part of his body however they smarted. Then he let himself fall against the back of a near by chair and clung with his little legs to the edges of it. That brought him into control of himself again and he stopped speaking for now he could listen to what the chief clerk was saying.

'Did you understand a word of it?' the chief clerk was asking surely he can't be trying to make fools of us? Oh dear cried his mother, in tears, perhaps he's terribly ill and were tormenting him. Grete! Grete! she called out then. Yes Mother? called his sister from the other side. They were calling to each other across Gregor's room. You must go this minute for the doctor Gregor is ill. Go for the doctor quick. Did you hear how he was speaking? That was no human voice said the chief clerk in a voice noticeably low beside the shrillness of the mother's. Anna! Anna! his father was calling through the hall to the kitchen clapping his hands get a locksmith at once! And the two girls were already running through the hall with a swish of skirts—how could his sister have got dressed so quickly?—and were tearing the front door open. There was no sound of its closing again they had evidently left it open as one does in houses where some great misfortune has happened.

But Gregor was now much calmer. The words he uttered were no longer understandable apparently although they seemed clear enough to him, even clearer than before perhaps because his ear had grown accustomed to the sound of them. Yet at any rate people now believed that something was wrong with him and were ready to help him. The positive certainty with which these first measures had been taken comforted him. He felt himself drawn once more into the human circle and hoped for great and remarkable results from both the doctor and the locksmith without really distinguishing precisely between them. To make his voice as clear as possible for the decisive conversation

that was now imminent he coughed a little, as quietly as he could, of course since this noise too might not sound like a human cough for all he was able to judge. In the next room meanwhile there was complete silence. Perhaps his parents were sitting at the table with the chief clerk, whispering perhaps they were all leaning against the door and listening.

Slowly Gregor pushed the chair towards the door, then let go of it caught hold of the door for support—the soles at the end of his little legs were somewhat sticky—and rested against it for a moment after his efforts. Then he set himself to turning the key in the lock with his mouth. It seemed, unhappily that he hadn't really any teeth—what could he grip the key with?—but on the other hand his jaws were certainly very strong with their help he did manage to set the key in motion heedless of the fact that he was undoubtedly damaging them somewhere since a brown fluid issued from his mouth flowed over the key and dripped on the floor. Just listen to that said the chief clerk next door he's turning the key. That was a great encouragement to Gregor but they should all have shouted encouragement to him, his father and mother too. Go on Gregor they should have called out, keep going, hold on to that key! And in the belief that they were all following his efforts intently he clenched his jaws recklessly on the key with all the force at his command. As the turning of the key progressed he circled round the lock holding on now only with his mouth pushing on the key, as required or pulling it down again with all the weight of his body. The louder click of the finally yielding lock literally quickened Gregor. With a deep breath of relief he said to himself So I didn't need the locksmith and laid his head on the handle to open the door wide.

Since he had to pull the door towards him, he was still invisible when it was really wide open. He had to edge himself slowly round the near half of the double door, and to do it very carefully if he was not to fall plump upon his back just on the threshold. He was still carrying out this difficult manoeuvre with no time to observe anything else, when he heard the chief clerk utter a loud Oh!—it sounded like a gust of wind—and now he could see the man, standing as he was nearest to the door clapping one hand before his open mouth and slowly backing away as if driven by some invisible steady pressure. His mother—in spite of the chief clerk's being there her hair was still undone and sticking up in all directions—first clasped her hands and looked at his father then took two steps towards Gregor and fell on the floor among her outspread skirts her face quite hidden on her breast. His father knotted his fist with a fierce expression on his face as if he meant to knock Gregor back into his room,

then looked uncertainly round the living room, covered his eyes with his hands and wept till his great chest heaved

Gregor did not go now into the living room but leaned against the inside of the firmly shut wing of the door so that only half his body was visible and his head above it bending sideways to look at the others. The light had meanwhile strengthened on the other side of the street one could see clearly a section of the endlessly long dark gray building opposite—it was a hospital—abruptly punctuated by its row of regular windows the rain was still falling but only in large singly discernible and literally singly splashing drops. The breakfast dishes were set out on the table lavishly for breakfast was the most important meal of the day to Gregor's father, who lingered it out for hours over various newspapers. Right opposite Gregor on the wall hung a photograph of himself on military service, as a lieutenant, hand on sword a carefree smile on his face inviting one to respect his uniform and military bearing. The door leading to the hall was open, and one could see that the front door stood open too, showing the landing beyond and the beginning of the stairs going down.

Well said Gregor knowing perfectly that he was the only one who had retained any composure, I'll put my clothes on at once pack up my samples and start off. Will you only let me go? You see, sir I'm not obstinate and I'm willing to work traveling is a hard life but I couldn't live without it. Where are you going sir? To the office? Yes? Will you give a true account of all this? One can be temporarily incapacitated, but that's just the moment for remembering former services and bearing in mind that later on, when the incapacity has been got over, one will certainly work with all the more industry and concentration. I'm loyally bound to serve the chief, you know that very well. Besides I have to provide for my parents and my sister. I'm in great difficulties but I'll get out of them again. Don't make things any worse for me than they are. Stand up for me in the firm. Travelers are not popular there I know. People think they earn sacks of money and just have a good time. A prejudice there's no particular reason for revising. But you, sir have a more comprehensive view of affairs than the rest of the staff yes let me tell you in confidence, a more comprehensive view than the chief himself who being the owner lets his judgment easily be swayed against one of his employees. And you know very well that the traveler who is never seen in the office almost the whole year round, can so easily fall a victim to gossip and ill luck and unfounded complaints which he mostly knows nothing about, except when he comes back exhausted from his rounds and only then suffers in person from their

evil consequences which he can no longer trace back to the original causes. Sir sir don't go away without a word to me to show that you think me in the right at least to some extent!

But at Gregor's very first words the chief clerk had already backed away and only stared at him with parted lips over one twitching shoulder. And while Gregor was speaking he did not stand still one moment but stole away towards the door without taking his eyes off Gregor yet only an inch at a time as if obeying some secret injunction to leave the room. He was already at the hall and the suddenness with which he took his last step out of the living room would have made one believe he had burned the sole of his foot. Once in the hall he stretched his right arm before him towards the staircase as if some supernatural power were waiting there to deliver him.

Gregor perceived that the chief clerk must on no account be allowed to go away in this frame of mind if his position in the firm were not to be endangered to the utmost. His parents did not understand this so well they had convinced themselves in the course of years that Gregor was settled for life in this firm and besides they were so preoccupied with their immediate troubles that all foresight had forsaken them. Yet Gregor had this foresight. The chief clerk must be detained soothed persuaded and finally won over the whole future of Gregor and his family depended on it! If only his sister had been there! She was intelligent she had begun to cry while Gregor was still lying quietly on his back. And no doubt the chief clerk so partial to ladies would have been guided by her she would have shut the door of the flat and in the hall talked him out of his horror. But she was not there and Gregor would have to handle the situation himself. And without remembering that he was still unaware what powers of movement he possessed, without even remembering that his words in all possibility indeed in all likelihood would again be unintelligible he let go the wing of the door, pushed himself through the opening started to walk towards the chief clerk who was already ridiculously clinging with both hands to the railing on the landing but immediately as he was feeling for a support he fell down with a little cry upon all his numerous legs. Hardly was he down when he experienced for the first time this morning a sense of physical comfort his legs had firm ground under them, they were completely obedient as he noted with joy they even strove to carry him forward in whatever direction he chose, and he was inclined to believe that a final relief from all his sufferings was at hand. But in the same moment as he found himself on the floor rocking with suppressed eagerness to move, not far from his mother, indeed just in front of her,

she who had seemed so completely crushed sprang all at once to her feet her arms and fingers outspread, cried Help for God's sake help! bent her head down as if to see Gregor better, yet on the contrary kept backing senselessly away had quite forgotten that the laden table stood behind her sat upon it hastily as if in absence of mind when she bumped into it and seemed altogether unaware that the big coffee pot beside her was upset and pouring coffee in a flood over the carpet

Mother Mother said Gregor in a low voice, and looked up at her The chief clerk for the moment had quite slipped from his mind instead, he could not resist snapping his jaws together at the sight of the streaming coffee That made his mother scream again she fled from the table and fell into the arms of his father who hastened to catch her But Gregor had now no time to spare for his parents, the chief clerk was already on the stairs with his chin on the banisters he was taking one last backward look Gregor made a spring, to be as sure as possible of overtaking him, the chief clerk must have divined his intention for he leaped down several steps and vanished he was still yelling Ugh! and it echoed through the whole staircase

Unfortunately the flight of the chief clerk seemed completely to upset Gregor's father, who had remained relatively calm until now, for instead of running after the man himself, or at least not hindering Gregor in his pursuit, he seized in his right hand the walking stick which the chief clerk had left behind on a chair, together with a hat and greatcoat snatched in his left hand a large newspaper from the table and began stamping his feet and flourishing the stick and the newspaper to drive Gregor back into his room No entreaty of Gregor's availed, indeed no entreaty was even understood, however humbly he bent his head his father only stamped on the floor the more loudly Behind his father his mother had torn open a window despite the cold weather and was leaning far out of it with her face in her hands A strong draught set in from the street to the staircase the window curtains blew in the newspapers on the table fluttered stray pages whisked over the floor Pitilessly Gregor's father drove him back hissing and crying Shoo! like a savage But Gregor was quite unpracticed in walking backwards it really was a slow business If he only had a chance to turn round he could get back to his room at once but he was afraid of exasperating his father by the slowness of such a rotation and at any moment the stick in his father's hand might hit him a fatal blow on the back or on the head In the end, however nothing else was left for him to do since to his horror he observed that in moving backwards he could not even control the direction he took and so, keeping an anxious eye on his father all the

time over his shoulder he began to turn round as quickly as he could which was in reality very slowly Perhaps his father noted his good intentions for he did not interfere except every now and then to help him in the manoeuvre from a distance with the point of the stick If only he would have stopped making that unbearable hissing noise! It made Gregor quite lose his head He had turned almost completely round when the hissing noise so distracted him that he even turned a little the wrong way again But when at last his head was fortunately right in front of the doorway it appeared that his body was too broad simply to get through the opening His father, of course, in his present mood was far from thinking of such a thing as opening the other half of the door, to let Gregor have enough space He had merely the fixed idea of driving Gregor back into his room as quickly as possible He would never have suffered Gregor to make the circumstantial preparations for standing up on end and perhaps slipping his way through the door Maybe he was now making more noise than ever to urge Gregor forward as if no obstacle impeded him, to Gregor, anyhow, the noise in his rear sounded no longer like the voice of one single father this was really no joke, and Gregor thrust himself—come what might—into the doorway One side of his body rose up he was tilted at an angle in the doorway, his flank was quite bruised, horrid blotches stained the white door, soon he was stuck fast and, left to himself could not have moved at all his legs on one side fluttered trembling in the air those on the other were crushed painfully to the floor—when from behind his father gave him a strong push which was literally a deliverance and he flew far into the room, bleeding freely The door was slammed behind him with the stick, and then at last there was silence

## II

Not until it was twilight did Gregor awake out of a deep sleep more like a swoon than a sleep He would certainly have waked up of his own accord not much later for he felt himself sufficiently rested and well slept but it seemed to him as if a fleeting step and a cautious shutting of the door leading into the hall had aroused him The electric lights in the street cast a pale sheen here and there on the ceiling and the upper surfaces of the furniture but down below where he lay it was dark Slowly awkwardly trying out his feelers which he now first learned to appreciate he pushed his way to the door to see what had been happening there His left side felt like one single long unpleasantly tense scar and he had actually to limp on his two rows of legs One little leg moreover, had been severely



damaged in the course of that morning's events—it was almost a miracle that only one had been damaged—and trailed uselessly behind him.

He had reached the door before he discovered what had really drawn him to it: the smell of food. For there stood a basin filled with fresh milk in which floated little sops of white bread. He could almost have laughed with joy since he was now still hungrier than in the morning and he dipped his head almost over the eyes straight into the milk. But soon in disappointment he withdrew it again, not only did he find it difficult to feed because of his tender left side—and he could only feed with the palpitating collaboration of his whole body—he did not like the milk either, although milk had been his favorite drink and that was certainly why his sister had set it there for him; indeed it was almost with repulsion that he turned away from the basin and crawled back to the middle of the room.

He could see through the crack of the door that the gas was turned on in the living room, but while usually at this time his father made a habit of reading the afternoon newspaper in a loud voice to his mother and occasionally to his sister as well, not a sound was now to be heard. Well, perhaps his father had recently given up this habit of reading aloud, which his sister had mentioned so often in conversation and in her letters. But there was the same silence all around, although the flat was certainly not empty of occupants. What a quiet life our family has been leading, said Gregor to himself, and as he sat there motionless staring into the darkness he felt great pride in the fact that he had been able to provide such a life for his parents and sister in such a fine flat. But what if all the quiet, the comfort, the contentment were now to end in horror? To keep himself from being lost in such thoughts Gregor took refuge in movement and crawled up and down the room.

Once during the long evening one of the side doors was opened a little and quickly shut again, later the other side door too, someone had apparently wanted to come in and then thought better of it. Gregor now stationed himself immediately before the living room door, determined to persuade any hesitating visitor to come in or at least to discover who it might be, but the door was not opened again and he waited in vain. In the early morning when the doors were locked they had all wanted to come in, now that he had opened one door and the other had apparently been opened during the day, no one came in and even the keys were on the other side of the doors.

It was late at night before the gas went out in the living room, and Gregor could easily tell that his parents and his sister had all stayed awake until then, for he could clearly hear the three of them

stealing away on tiptoe. No one was likely to visit him not until the morning that was certain, so he had plenty of time to meditate at his leisure on how he was to arrange his life afresh. But the lofty empty room in which he had to lie flat on the floor filled him with an apprehension he could not account for, since it had been his very own room for the past five years—and with a half-unconscious action, not without a slight feeling of shame, he scuttled under the sofa where he felt comfortable at once, although his back was a little cramped and he could not lift his head up, and his only regret was that his body was too broad to get the whole of it under the sofa.

He stayed there all night, spending the time partly in a light slumber from which his hunger kept waking him up with a start and partly in worrying and sketching vague hopes which all led to the same conclusion: that he must lie low for the present and by exercising patience and the utmost consideration help the family to bear the inconvenience he was bound to cause them in his present condition.

Very early in the morning it was still almost night. Gregor had the chance to test the strength of his new resolutions for his sister, nearly fully dressed, opened the door from the hall and peered in. She did not see him at once, yet when she caught sight of him under the sofa—well, he had to be some where he couldn't have flown away, could he?—she was so startled that without being able to help it she slammed the door shut again. But as if regretting her behavior she opened the door again immediately and came in on tiptoe as if she were visiting an invalid or even a stranger. Gregor had pushed his head forward to the very edge of the sofa and watched her. Would she notice that he had left the milk standing and not for lack of hunger, and would she bring in some other kind of food more to his taste? If she did not do it of her own accord he would rather starve than draw her attention to the fact, although he felt a wild impulse to dart out from under the sofa, throw himself at her feet and beg her for something to eat. But his sister at once noticed with surprise that the basin was still full, except for a little milk that had been spilt all around it. She lifted it immediately, not with her bare hands, true, but with a cloth and carried it away. Gregor was wildly curious to know what she would bring instead and made various speculations about it. Yet what she actually did next, in the goodness of her heart, he could never have guessed at. To find out what he liked she brought him a whole selection of food, all set out on an old newspaper. There were old half-decayed vegetables, bones from last night's supper covered with a white sauce that had thickened, some raisins and almonds, a piece of cheese



that Gregor would have called uneatable two days ago a dry roll of bread a buttered roll and a roll both buttered and salted Besides all that, she set down again the same basin into which she had poured some water, and which was apparently to be reserved for his exclusive use And with fine tact knowing that Gregor would not eat in her presence, she withdrew quickly and even turned the key, to let him understand that he could take his ease as much as he liked Gregor's legs all whizzed towards the food His wounds must have healed completely, moreover for he felt no disability which amazed him and made him reflect how more than a month ago he had cut one finger a little with a knife and had still suffered pain from the wound only the day before yesterday Am I less sensitive now? he thought and sucked greedily at the cheese which above all the other edibles attracted him at once and strongly One after another and with tears of satisfaction in his eyes he quickly devoured the cheese, the vegetables and the sauce the fresh food on the other hand had no charms for him he could not even stand the smell of it and actually dragged away to some little distance the things he could eat He had long finished his meal and was only lying lazily on the same spot when his sister turned the key slowly as a sign for him to retreat That roused him at once although he was nearly asleep and he hurried under the sofa again But it took considerable self-control for him to stay under the sofa even for the short time his sister was in the room since the large meal had swollen his body somewhat and he was so cramped he could hardly breathe Slight attacks of breathlessness afflicted him and his eyes were starting a little out of his head as he watched his unsuspecting sister sweeping together with a broom not only the remains of what he had eaten but even the things he had not touched as if these were now of no use to anyone and hastily shoveling it all into a bucket which she covered with a wooden lid and carried away Hardly had she turned her back when Gregor came from under the sofa and stretched and puffed himself out

In this manner Gregor was fed once in the early morning while his parents and the servant girl were still asleep and a second time after they had all had their midday dinner for then his parents took a short nap and the servant girl could be sent out on some errand or other by his sister Not that they would have wanted him to starve of course but perhaps they could not have borne to know more about his feeding than from hearsay, perhaps too his sister wanted to spare them such little anxieties wherever possible since they had quite enough to bear as it was

Under what pretext the doctor and the locksmith had been got rid of on that first morning Gregor

could not discover, for since what he said was not understood by the others it never struck any of them not even his sister that he could understand what they said and so whenever his sister came into his room he had to content himself with hearing her utter only a sigh now and then and an occasional appeal to the saints Later on when she had got a little used to the situation—of course she could never get completely used to it—she sometimes threw out a remark which was kindly meant or could be so interpreted Well he liked his dinner today she would say when Gregor had made a good clearance of his food and when he had not eaten which gradually happened more and more often she would say almost sadly Everything's been left standing again

But although Gregor could get no news directly he overheard a lot from the neighboring rooms and as soon as voices were audible he would run to the door of the room concerned and press his whole body against it In the first few days especially there was no conversation that did not refer to him somehow even if only indirectly For two whole days there were family consultations at every meal-time about what should be done but also between meals the same subject was discussed for there were always at least two members of the family at home since no one wanted to be alone in the flat and to leave it quite empty was unthinkable And on the very first of these days the household cook—it was not quite clear what and how much she knew of the situation—went down on her knees to his mother and begged leave to go and when she departed a quarter of an hour later gave thanks for her dismissal with tears in her eyes as if for the greatest benefit that could have been conferred on her, and without any prompting swore a solemn oath that she would never say a single word to any one about what had happened

Now Gregor's sister had to cook too, helping her mother true the cooking did not amount to much, for they ate scarcely anything Gregor was always hearing one of the family vainly urging another to eat and getting no answer but Thanks I've had all I want or something similar Perhaps they drank nothing either Time and again his sister kept asking his father if he wouldn't like some beer and offered kindly to go and fetch it herself and when he made no answer suggested that she could ask the concierge to fetch it, so that he need feel no sense of obligation but then a round No came from his father and no more was said about it

In the course of that very first day Gregor's father explained the family's financial position and prospects to both his mother and his sister Now and then he rose from the table to get some voucher or memorandum out of the small safe he had rescued

from the collapse of his business five years earlier. One could hear him opening the complicated lock and rustling papers out and shutting it again. This statement made by his father was the first cheerful information Gregor had heard since his imprisonment. He had been of the opinion that nothing at all was left over from his father's business; at least his father had never said anything to the contrary, and of course he had not asked him directly. At that time Gregor's sole desire was to do his utmost to help the family to forget as soon as possible the catastrophe which had overwhelmed the business and thrown them all into a state of complete despair. And so he had set to work with unusual ardor and almost overnight had become a commercial traveler instead of a little clerk, with of course much greater chances of earning money, and his success was immediately translated into good round coin which he could lay on the table for his amazed and happy family. These had been fine times and they had never recurred at least not with the same sense of glory, although later on Gregor had earned so much money that he was able to meet the expenses of the whole household and did so. They had simply got used to it both the family and Gregor, the money was gratefully accepted and gladly given but there was no special uprush of warm feeling. With his sister alone had he remained intimate and it was a secret plan of his that she who loved music, unlike himself and could play movingly on the violin should be sent next year to study at the Conservatorium despite the great expense that would entail which must be made up in some other way. During his brief visits home the Conservatorium was often mentioned in the talks he had with his sister but always merely as a beautiful dream which could never come true and his parents discouraged even these innocent references to it yet Gregor had made up his mind firmly about it and meant to announce the fact with due solemnity on Christmas Day.

Such were the thoughts completely futile in his present condition that went through his head as he stood clinging upright to the door and listening. Sometimes out of sheer weariness he had to give up listening and let his head fall negligently against the door but he always had to pull himself together again at once for even the slight sound his head made was audible next door and brought all conversation to a stop. What can he be doing now? his father would say after a while, obviously turning towards the door and only then would the interrupted conversation gradually be set going again.

Gregor was now informed as amply as he could wish—for his father tended to repeat himself in his explanations partly because it was a long time since he had handled such matters and partly because his mother could not always grasp things at once—

that a certain amount of investments, a very small amount it was true had survived the wreck of their fortunes and had even increased a little because the dividends had not been touched meanwhile. And besides that the money Gregor brought home every month—he had kept only a few dollars for himself—had never been quite used up and now amounted to a small capital sum. Behind the door Gregor nodded his head eagerly rejoiced at this evidence of unexpected thrift and foresight. True he could really have paid off some more of his father's debts to the chief with this extra money and so brought much nearer the day on which he could quit his job but doubtless it was better the way his father had arranged it.

Yet this capital was by no means sufficient to let the family live on the interest of it for one year, perhaps or at the most two they could live on the principal that was all. It was simply a sum that ought not to be touched and should be kept for a rainy day. Money for living expenses would have to be earned. Now his father was still hale enough but an old man and he had done no work for the past five years and could not be expected to do much during these five years the first years of leisure in his laborious though unsuccessful life he had grown rather fat and become sluggish. And Gregor's old mother how was she to earn a living with her asthma which troubled her even when she walked through the flat and kept her lying on a sofa every other day panting for breath beside an open window? And was his sister to earn her bread she who was still a child of seventeen and whose life hitherto had been so pleasant consisting as it did in dressing herself nicely sleeping long helping in the house keeping going out to a few modest entertainments and above all playing the violin? At first whenever the need for earning money was mentioned Gregor let go his hold on the door and threw himself down on the cool leather sofa beside it he felt so hot with shame and grief.

Often he just lay there the long nights through without sleeping at all scrabbling for hours on the leather. Or he nerved himself to the great effort of pushing an armchair to the window then crawled up over the window sill and braced against the chair leaned against the window panes obviously in some recollection of the sense of freedom that looking out of a window always used to give him. For in reality day by day things that were even a little way off were growing dimmer to his sight the hospital across the street which he used to execrate for being all too often before his eyes was now quite beyond his range of vision, and if he had not known that he lived in Charlotte Street a quiet street but still a city street he might have believed that his window gave on a desert waste where gray

sky and gray land blended indistinguishably into each other. His quick-witted sister only needed to observe twice that the armchair stood by the window after that whenever she had tidied the room she always pushed the chair back to the same place at the window and even left the inner casements open.

If he could have spoken to her and thanked her for all she had to do for him, he could have borne her ministrations better, as it was they oppressed him. She certainly tried to make as light as possible of whatever was disagreeable in her task and as time went on she succeeded, of course, more and more, but time brought more enlightenment to Gregor too. The very way she came in distressed him. Hardly was she in the room when she rushed to the window without even taking time to shut the door, careful as she was usually to shield the sight of Gregor's room from the others, and as if she were almost suffocating, tore the casements open with hasty fingers, standing then in the open draught for a while even in the bitterest cold and drawing deep breaths. This noisy scurry of hers upset Gregor twice a day; he would crouch trembling under the sofa all the time, knowing quite well that she would certainly have spared him such a disturbance had she found it at all possible to stay in his presence without opening the window.

On one occasion, about a month after Gregor's metamorphosis, when there was surely no reason for her to be still startled at his appearance, she came a little earlier than usual and found him gazing out of the window quite motionless, and thus well placed to look like a bogey. Gregor would not have been surprised had she not come in at all, for she could not immediately open the window while he was there, but not only did she retreat, she jumped back as if in alarm and banged the door shut, a stranger might well have thought that he had been lying in wait for her, there meaning to bite her. Of course he hid himself under the sofa at once, but he had to wait until midday before she came again, and she seemed more ill at ease than usual. This made him realize how repulsive the sight of him still was to her, and that it was bound to go on being repulsive, and what an effort it must cost her not to run away even from the sight of the small portion of his body that stuck out from under the sofa. In order to spare her that, therefore, one day he carried a sheet on his back to the sofa—it cost him four hours' labor—and arranged it there in such a way as to hide him completely, so that even if she were to bend down she could not see him. Had she considered the sheet unnecessary, she would certainly have stripped it off the sofa again, for it was clear enough that this curtaining and confining of himself was not likely to conduce to Gregor's com-

fort, but she left it where it was, and Gregor even fancied that he caught a thankful glance from her eye when he lifted the sheet carefully a very little with his head to see how she was taking the new arrangement.

For the first fortnight his parents could not bring themselves to the point of entering his room, and he often heard them expressing their appreciation of his sister's activities, whereas formerly they had frequently scolded her for being as they thought a somewhat useless daughter. But now both of them often waited outside the door, his father and his mother, while his sister tidied his room, and as soon as she came out she had to tell them exactly how things were in the room, what Gregor had eaten, how he had conducted himself this time, and whether there was not perhaps some slight improvement in his condition. His mother, moreover, began relatively soon to want to visit him, but his father and sister dissuaded her at first with arguments which Gregor listened to very attentively and altogether approved. Later, however, she had to be held back by main force, and when she cried out:

Do let me in to Gregor, he is my unfortunate son! Can't you understand that I must go to him? Gregor thought that it might be well to have her come in not every day, of course, but perhaps once a week, she understood things after all much better than his sister, who was only a child despite the efforts she was making and had perhaps taken on so difficult a task merely out of childish thoughtlessness.

Gregor's desire to see his mother was soon fulfilled. During the daytime he did not want to show himself at the window out of consideration for his parents, but he could not crawl very far around the few square yards of floor space he had, nor could he bear lying quietly at rest all during the night, while he was fast losing any interest he had ever taken in food, so that for mere recreation he had formed the habit of crawling crisscross over the walls and ceiling. He especially enjoyed hanging suspended from the ceiling; it was much better than lying on the floor, one could breathe more freely, one's body swung and rocked lightly, and in the almost blissful absorption induced by this suspension it could happen to his own surprise that he let go and fell plump on the floor. Yet he now had his body much better under control than formerly, and even such a big fall did him no harm. His sister at once remarked the new distraction Gregor had found for himself—he left traces behind him of the sticky stuff on his soles wherever he crawled—and she got the idea in her head of giving him as wide a field as possible to crawl in, and of removing the pieces of furniture that hindered him, above all the chest of drawers and the writing desk. But that was more than she

could manage all by herself she did not dare ask her father to help her and as for the servant girl a young creature of sixteen who had had the courage to stay on after the cook's departure she could not be asked to help for she had begged as an especial favor that she might keep the kitchen door locked and open it only on a definite summons so there was nothing left but to apply to her mother at an hour when her father was out. And the old lady did come with exclamations of joyful eagerness, which however died away at the door of Gregor's room. Gregor's sister of course went in first to see that everything was in order before letting his mother enter. In great haste Gregor pulled the sheet lower and rucked it more in folds so that it really looked as if it had been thrown accidentally over the sofa. And this time he did not peer out from under it; he renounced the pleasure of seeing his mother on this occasion and was only glad that she had come at all. Come in he's out of sight said his sister obviously leading her mother in by the hand. Gregor could now hear the two women struggling to shift the heavy old chest from its place and his sister claiming the greater part of the labor for herself without listening to the admonitions of her mother who feared she might overstrain herself. It took a long time. After at least a quarter of an hour's tugging his mother objected that the chest had better be left where it was for in the first place it was too heavy and could never be got out before his father came home and standing in the middle of the room like that it would only hamper Gregor's movements, while in the second place it was not at all certain that removing the furniture would be doing a service to Gregor. She was inclined to think to the contrary: the sight of the naked walls made her own heart heavy and why shouldn't Gregor have the same feeling considering that he had been used to his furniture for so long and might feel forlorn without it. And doesn't it look she concluded in a low voice—in fact she had been almost whispering all the time as if to avoid letting Gregor whose exact whereabouts she did not know hear even the tones of her voice, for she was convinced that he could not understand her words—doesn't it look as if we were showing him by taking away his furniture that we have given up hope of his ever getting better and are just leaving him coldly to himself? I think it would be best to keep his room exactly as it has always been so that when he comes back to us he will find everything unchanged and be able all the more easily to forget what has happened in between.

On hearing these words from his mother Gregor realized that the lack of all direct human speech for the past two months together with the monotony of family life must have confused his mind, other

wise he could not account for the fact that he had quite earnestly looked forward to having his room emptied of furnishing. Did he really want his warm room so comfortably fitted with old family furniture, to be turned into a naked den in which he would certainly be able to crawl unhampered in all directions but at the price of shedding simultaneously all recollection of his human background? He had indeed been so near the brink of forgetfulness that only the voice of his mother, which he had not heard for so long had drawn him back from it. Nothing should be taken out of his room everything must stay as it was; he could not dispense with the good influence of the furniture on his state of mind and even if the furniture did hamper him in his senseless crawling round and round, that was no drawback but a great advantage.

Unfortunately his sister was of the contrary opinion: she had grown accustomed, and not without reason, to consider herself an expert in Gregor's affairs as against her parents and so her mother's advice was now enough to make her determined on the removal not only of the chest and the writing desk which had been her first intention but of all the furniture except the indispensable sofa. This determination was not of course merely the outcome of childish recalcitrance and of the self-confidence she had recently developed so unexpectedly and at such cost she had in fact perceived that Gregor needed a lot of space to crawl about in while on the other hand he never used the furniture at all, so far as could be seen. Another factor might have been also the enthusiastic temperament of an adolescent girl, which seeks to indulge itself on every opportunity and which now tempted Grete to exaggerate the horror of her brother's circumstances in order that she might do all the more for him. In a room where Gregor lorded it all alone over empty walls no one save herself was likely ever to set foot.

And so she was not to be moved from her resolve by her mother, who seemed moreover to be ill at ease in Gregor's room and therefore unsure of herself, was soon reduced to silence and helped her daughter as best she could to push the chest outside. Now Gregor could do without the chest, if need be but the writing desk he must retain. As soon as the two women had got the chest out of his room, groaning as they pushed it, Gregor stuck his head out from under the sofa to see how he might intervene as kindly and cautiously as possible. But as bad luck would have it, his mother was the first to return leaving Grete clasping the chest in the room next door where she was trying to shift it all by herself, without of course moving it from the spot. His mother however was not accustomed to the sight of him; it might sicken her and so in alarm Gregor backed quickly to the other end of the sofa yet

could not prevent the sheet from swaying a little in front. That was enough to put her on the alert. She paused, stood still for a moment and then went back to Grete.

Although Gregor kept reassuring himself that nothing out of the way was happening but only a few bits of furniture were being changed round, he soon had to admit that all this trotting to and fro of the two women, their little ejaculations and the scraping of furniture along the floor affected him like a vast disturbance coming from all sides at once, and however much he tucked in his head and legs and cowered to the very floor he was bound to confess that he would not be able to stand it for long. They were clearing his room out, taking away everything he loved: the chest in which he kept his fret saw and other tools was already dragged off; they were now loosening the writing desk which had almost sunk into the floor, the desk at which he had done all his homework when he was at the commercial academy at the grammar school before that and yes, even at the primary school—he had no more time to waste in weighing the good intentions of the two women whose existence he had by now almost forgotten, for they were so exhausted that they were laboring in silence and nothing could be heard but the heavy scuffling of their feet.

And so he rushed out—the women were just leaning against the writing desk in the next room to give themselves a breather—and four times changed his direction since he really did not know what to rescue first: then on the wall opposite which was already otherwise cleared, he was struck by the picture of the lady muffled in so much fur and quickly crawled up to it and pressed himself to the glass which was a good surface to hold on to and comforted his hot belly. This picture at least, which was entirely hidden beneath him, was going to be removed by nobody. He turned his head towards the door of the living room so as to observe the women when they came back.

They had not allowed themselves much of a rest and were already coming. Grete had twined her arm round her mother and was almost supporting her. Well, what shall we take now? said Grete, looking round. Her eyes met Gregor's from the wall. She kept her composure, presumably because of her mother bent her head down to her mother to keep her from looking up and said, although in a fluttering unpremeditated voice: Come, hadn't we better go back to the living room for a moment? Her intentions were clear enough to Gregor: she wanted to bestow her mother in safety and then chase him down from the wall. Well, just let her try it! He clung to his picture and would not give it up. He would rather fly in Grete's face.

But Grete's words had succeeded in disquieting

her mother, who took a step to one side, caught sight of the huge brown mass on the flowered wallpaper and before she was really conscious that what she saw was Gregor, screamed in a loud hoarse voice:

Oh God, oh God! fell with outspread arms over the sofa as if giving up and did not move. Gregor! cried his sister, shaking her fist and glaring at him. This was the first time she had directly addressed him since his metamorphosis. She ran into the next room for some aromatic essence with which to rouse her mother from her fainting fit. Gregor wanted to help too—there was still time to rescue the picture—but he was stuck fast to the glass and had to tear himself loose, he then ran after his sister into the next room as if he could advise her as he used to do, but then had to stand helplessly behind her, she meanwhile searched among various small bottles and when she turned round started in alarm at the sight of him, one bottle fell on the floor and broke, a splinter of glass cut Gregor's face and some kind of corrosive medicine splashed him without pausing a moment longer. Grete gathered up all the bottles she could carry and ran to her mother with them; she banged the door shut with her foot. Gregor was now cut off from his mother, who was perhaps nearly dying because of him; he dared not open the door for fear of frightening away his sister, who had to stay with her mother, there was nothing he could do but wait and harass himself by self-reproach and worry he began now to crawl to and fro over everything: walls, furniture and ceiling and finally in his despair when the whole room seemed to be reeling round him, fell down on to the middle of the big table.

A little while elapsed, Gregor was still lying there feebly and all around was quiet, perhaps that was a good omen. Then the doorbell rang. The servant girl was of course locked in her kitchen and Grete would have to open the door. It was his father: What's been happening? were his first words. Grete's face must have told him everything. Grete answered in a muffled voice, apparently hiding her head on his breast: Mother has been fainting but she's better now. Gregor's broken loose. Just what I expected, said his father, just what I've been telling you, but you women would never listen. It was clear to Gregor that his father had taken the worst interpretation of Grete's all too brief statement and was assuming that Gregor had been guilty of some violent act. Therefore Gregor must now try to propitiate his father since he had neither time nor means for an explanation. And so he fled to the door of his own room and crouched against it, to let his father see as soon as he came in from the hall that his son had the good intention of getting back into his room immediately and that it was not necessary to drive him there but that if

only the door were opened he would disappear at once

Yet his father was not in the mood to perceive such fine distinctions. Ah! he cried as soon as he appeared in a tone which sounded at once angry and exultant. Gregor drew his head back from the door and lifted it to look at his father. Truly, this was not the father he had imagined to himself. Admittedly he had been too absorbed of late in his new recreation of crawling over the ceiling to take the same interest as before in what was happening elsewhere in the flat and he ought really to be prepared for some changes. And yet and yet, could that be his father? The man who used to lie wearily sunk in bed whenever Gregor set out on a business journey who welcomed him back of an evening lying in a long chair in a dressing gown who could not really rise to his feet but only lifted his arms in greeting and on the rare occasions when he did go out with his family on one or two Sundays a year and on high holidays walked between Gregor and his mother who were slow walkers anyhow even more slowly than they did muffled in his old great-coat shuffling laboriously forward with the help of his crook handled stick which he set down most cautiously at every step and, whenever he wanted to say anything, nearly always came to a full stop and gathered his escort around him? Now he was standing there in fine shape dressed in a smart blue uniform with gold buttons, such as bank messengers wear his strong double chin bulged over the stiff high collar of his jacket, from under his bushy eyebrows his black eyes darted fresh and penetrating glances his onetime tangled white hair had been combed flat on either side of a shining and carefully exact parting. He pitched his cap which bore a gold monogram, probably the badge of some bank, in a wide sweep across the whole room on to a sofa and with the tail ends of his jacket thrown back his hands in his trouser pockets, advanced with a grim visage towards Gregor. Likely enough he did not himself know what he meant to do at any rate he lifted his feet uncommonly high and Gregor was dumbfounded at the enormous size of his shoe soles. But Gregor could not risk standing up to him aware as he had been from the very first day of his new life that his father believed only the severest measures suitable for dealing with him. And so he ran before his father stopping when he stopped and scuttling forward again when his father made any kind of move. In this way they circled the room several times without anything decisive happening indeed the whole operation did not even look like a pursuit because it was carried out so slowly. And so Gregor did not leave the floor, for he feared that his father might take as a piece of peculiar wickedness any excursion of his over the walls or the ceiling.

All the same he could not stay this course much longer for while his father took one step he had to carry out a whole series of movements. He was already beginning to feel breathless, just as in his former life his lungs had not been very dependable. As he was staggering along trying to concentrate his energy on running hardly keeping his eyes open in his dazed state never even thinking of any other escape than simply going forward and having almost forgotten that the walls were free to him which in this room were well provided with finely carved pieces of furniture full of knobs and crevices—suddenly something lightly flung landed close behind him and rolled before him. It was an apple a second apple followed immediately. Gregor came to a stop in alarm, there was no point in running on for his father was determined to bombard him. He had filled his pockets with fruit from the dish on the sideboard and was now shying apple after apple without taking particularly good aim for the moment. The small red apples rolled about the floor as if magnetized and cannoned into each other. An apple thrown without much force grazed Gregor's back and glanced off harmlessly. But another following immediately landed right on his back and sank in. Gregor wanted to drag himself forward as if this startling incredible pain could be left behind him but he felt as if nailed to the spot and flattened himself out in a complete derangement of all his senses. With his last conscious look he saw the door of his room being torn open and his mother rushing out ahead of his screaming sister, in her underbodice for her daughter had loosened her clothing to let her breathe more freely and recover from her swoon he saw his mother rushing towards his father leaving one after another behind her on the floor her loosened petticoats, stumbling over her petticoats straight to his father and embracing him in complete union with him—but here Gregor's sight began to fail—with her hands clasped round his father's neck as she begged for her son's life.

### III

The serious injury done to Gregor which disabled him for more than a month—the apple went on sticking in his body as a visible reminder since no one ventured to remove it—seemed to have made even his father recollect that Gregor was a member of the family despite his present unfortunate and repulsive shape and ought not to be treated as an enemy that on the contrary family duty required the suppression of disgust and the exercise of patience nothing but patience.

And although his injury had impaired probably for ever, his powers of movement, and for the time being it took him long long minutes to creep across



his room like an old invalid—there was no question now of crawling up the wall—yet in his own opinion he was sufficiently compensated for this worsening of his condition by the fact that towards evening the living room door which he used to watch intently for an hour or two beforehand was always thrown open so that lying in the darkness of his room invisible to the family, he could see them all at the lamp lit table and listen to their talk by general consent as it were, very different from his earlier eavesdropping.

True then intercourse lacked the lively character of former times which he had always called to mind with a certain wistfulness in the small hotel bedrooms where he had been wont to throw himself down, tired out on damp bedding. They were now mostly very silent. Soon after supper his father would fall asleep in his armchair his mother and sister would admonish each other to be silent his mother bending low over the lamp stitched at fine sewing for an underwear firm his sister who had taken a job as a salesgirl was learning shorthand and French in the evenings on the chance of bettering herself. Sometimes his father woke up, and as if quite unaware that he had been sleeping said to his mother 'What a lot of sewing you're doing today!' and at once fell asleep again, while the two women exchanged a tired smile.

With a kind of mulishness his father persisted in keeping his uniform on even in the house his dressing gown hung uselessly on its peg and he slept fully dressed where he sat as if he were ready for service at any moment and even here only at the beck and call of his superior. As a result, his uniform which was not brand new to start with began to look dirty, despite all the loving care of the mother and sister to keep it clean, and Gregor often spent whole evenings gazing at the many greasy spots on the garment, gleaming with gold buttons always in a high state of polish, in which the old man sat sleeping in extreme discomfort and yet quite peacefully.

As soon as the clock struck ten his mother tried to rouse his father with gentle words and to persuade him after that to get into bed for sitting there he could not have a proper sleep and that was what he needed most since he had to go on duty at six. But with the mulishness that had obsessed him since he became a bank messenger he always insisted on staying longer at the table although he regularly fell asleep again and in the end only with the greatest trouble could be got out of his armchair and into his bed. However insistently Gregor's mother and sister kept urging him with gentle reminders he would go on slowly shaking his head for a quarter of an hour, keeping his eyes shut and refuse to get to his feet. The mother plucked at his sleeve whispering

endearments in his ear, the sister left her lessons to come to her mother's help but Gregor's father was not to be caught. He would only sink down deeper in his chair. Not until the two women hoisted him up by the armpits did he open his eyes and look at them both one after the other usually with the remark 'This is a life. This is the peace and quiet of my old age.' And leaning on the two of them he would heave himself up with difficulty as if he were a great burden to himself suffer them to lead him as far as the door and then wave them off and go on alone while the mother abandoned her needlework and the sister her pen in order to run after him and help him farther.

Who could find time in this overworked and tired out family to bother about Gregor more than was absolutely needful? The household was reduced more and more the servant girl was turned off a gigantic bony charwoman with white hair flying round her head came in morning and evening to do the rough work everything else was done by Gregor's mother as well as great piles of sewing. Even various family ornaments which his mother and sister used to wear with pride at parties and celebrations had to be sold as Gregor discovered of an evening from hearing them all discuss the prices obtained. But what they lamented most was the fact that they could not leave the flat which was much too big for their present circumstances, because they could not think of any way to shift Gregor. Yet Gregor saw well enough that consideration for him was not the main difficulty preventing the removal for they could have easily shifted him in some suitable box with a few air holes in it what really kept them from moving into another flat was rather their own complete hopelessness and the belief that they had been singled out for a misfortune such as had never happened to any of their relations or acquaintances. They fulfilled to the uttermost all that the world demands of poor people, the father fetched breakfast for the small clerks in the bank, the mother devoted her energy to making underwear for strangers the sister trotted to and fro behind the counter at the behest of customers but more than this they had not the strength to do. And the wound in Gregor's back began to nag at him afresh when his mother and sister after getting his father into bed came back again left their work lying, drew close to each other and sat cheek by cheek, when his mother pointing towards his room, said 'Shut that door now Grete' and he was left again in darkness while next door the women mingled their tears or perhaps sat dry-eyed staring at the table.

Gregor hardly slept at all by night or by day. He was often haunted by the idea that next time the door opened he would take the family's affairs in



hand again just as he used to do, once more after this long interval, there appeared in his thoughts the figures of the chief and the chief clerk the commercial travelers and the apprentices the porter who was so dull-witted, two or three friends in other firms a chambermaid in one of the rural hotels a sweet and fleeting memory a cashier in a milliner's shop whom he had wooed earnestly but too slowly—they all appeared together with strangers or people he had quite forgotten but instead of helping him and his family they were one and all unapproachable and he was glad when they vanished. At other times he would not be in the mood to bother about his family he was only filled with rage at the way they were neglecting him and although he had no clear idea of what he might care to eat he would make plans for getting into the larder to take the food that was after all his due even if he were not hungry. His sister no longer took thought to bring him what might especially please him but in the morning and at noon before she went to business hurriedly pushed into his room with her foot any food that was available and in the evening cleared it out again with one sweep of the broom, heedless of whether it had been merely tasted or—as most frequently happened—left untouched. The cleaning of his room which she now did always in the evenings, could not have been more hastily done. Streaks of dirt stretched along the walls, here and there lay balls of dust and filth. At first Gregor used to station himself in some particularly filthy corner when his sister arrived in order to reproach her with it so to speak. But he could have sat there for weeks without getting her to make any improvement she could see the dirt as well as he did but she had simply made up her mind to leave it alone. And yet with a touchiness that was new to her which seemed anyhow to have infected the whole family, she jealously guarded her claim to be the sole caretaker of Gregor's room. His mother once subjected his room to a thorough cleaning which was achieved only by means of several buckets of water—all this dampness of course upset Gregor too and he lay widespread sulky and motionless on the sofa—but she was well punished for it. Hardly had his sister noticed the changed aspect of his room that evening than she rushed in high dudgeon into the living room and despite the imploringly raised hands of her mother burst into a storm of weeping, while her parents—her father had of course been startled out of his chair—looked on at first in helpless amazement then they too began to go into action the father reproached the mother on his right for not having left the cleaning of Gregor's room to his sister shrieked at the sister on his left that never again was she to be allowed to clean Gregor's room while the mother

tried to pull the father into his bedroom since he was beyond himself with agitation the sister shaken with sobs, then beat upon the table with her small fists and Gregor hissed loudly with rage because not one of them thought of shutting the door to spare him such a spectacle and so much noise.

Still even if the sister exhausted by her daily work, had grown tired of looking after Gregor as she did formerly there was no need for his mother's intervention or for Gregor's being neglected at all. The chairwoman was there. This old widow whose strong bony frame had enabled her to survive the worst a long life could offer by no means recoiled from Gregor. Without being in the least curious she had once by chance opened the door of his room and at the sight of Gregor who taken by surprise began to rush to and fro although no one was chasing him merely stood there with her arms folded. From that time she never failed to open his door a little for a moment morning and evening to have a look at him. At first she even used to call him to her with words which apparently she took to be friendly such as 'Come along then, you old dung beetle!' or 'Look at the old dung beetle then!' To such allocutions Gregor made no answer but stayed motionless where he was as if the door had never been opened. Instead of being allowed to disturb him so senselessly whenever the whim took her, she should rather have been ordered to clean out his room daily, that chairwoman! Once early in the morning—heavy rain was lashing on the window panes perhaps a sign that spring was on the way—Gregor was so exasperated when she began addressing him again that he ran at her as if to attack her, although slowly and feebly enough. But the chairwoman instead of showing fright merely lifted high a chair that happened to be beside the door and as she stood there with her mouth wide open it was clear that she meant to shut it only when she brought the chair down on Gregor's back. 'So you're not coming any nearer?' she asked, as Gregor turned away again and quietly put the chair back into the corner.

Gregor was now eating hardly anything. Only when he happened to pass the food laid out for him did he take a bit of something in his mouth as a pastime, kept it there for an hour at a time and usually spat it out again. At first he thought it was chagrin over the state of his room that prevented him from eating yet he soon got used to the various changes in his room. It had become a habit in the family to push into his room things there was no room for elsewhere and there were plenty of these now since one of the rooms had been let to three lodgers. These serious gentlemen—all three of them with full beards as Gregor once observed through a crack in the door—had a passion

for order, not only in their own room but since they were now members of the household, in all its arrangements especially in the kitchen. Superfluous not to say dirty objects they could not bear. Besides, they had brought with them most of the furnishings they needed. For this reason many things could be dispensed with that it was no use trying to sell but that should not be thrown away either. All of them found their way into Gregor's room. The ash can likewise and the kitchen garbage can. Anything that was not needed for the moment was simply flung into Gregor's room by the charwoman, who did everything in a hurry. Fortunately Gregor usually saw only the object whatever it was, and the hand that held it. Perhaps she intended to take the things away again as time and opportunity offered or to collect them until she could throw them all out in a heap, but in fact they just lay wherever she happened to throw them, except when Gregor pushed his way through the junk heap and shifted it some what at first out of necessity, because he had not room enough to crawl but later with increasing enjoyment, although after such excursions being sad and weary to death he would lie motionless for hours. And since the lodgers often ate their supper at home in the common living room, the living room door stayed shut many an evening, yet Gregor reconciled himself quite easily to the shutting of the door for often enough on evenings when it was opened he had disregarded it entirely and lain in the darkest corner of his room quite unnoticed by the family. But on one occasion the charwoman left the door open a little and it stayed ajar even when the lodgers came in for supper and the lamp was lit. They set themselves at the top end of the table where formerly Gregor and his father and mother had eaten their meals, unfolded their napkins and took knife and fork in hand. At once his mother appeared in the other doorway with a dish of meat and close behind her his sister with a dish of potatoes piled high. The food steamed with a thick vapor. The lodgers bent over the food set before them as if to scrutinize it before eating, in fact the man in the middle who seemed to pass for an authority with the other two cut a piece of meat as it lay on the dish obviously to discover if it were tender or should be sent back to the kitchen. He showed satisfaction and Gregor's mother and sister who had been watching anxiously breathed freely and began to smile.

The family itself took its meals in the kitchen. None the less Gregor's father came into the living room before going into the kitchen and with one prolonged bow cap in hand made a round of the table. The lodgers all stood up and murmured something in their beards. When they were alone again they ate their food in almost complete silence.

It seemed remarkable to Gregor that among the various noises coming from the table he could always distinguish the sound of their masticating teeth, as if this were a sign to Gregor that one needed teeth in order to eat and that with toothless jaws even of the finest make one could do nothing.

I'm hungry enough, said Gregor sadly to himself, but not for that kind of food. How these lodgers are stuffing themselves, and here am I dying of starvation!

On that very evening—during the whole of his time there Gregor could not remember ever having heard the violin—the sound of violin playing came from the kitchen. The lodgers had already finished their supper, the one in the middle had brought out a newspaper and given the other two a page apiece and now they were leaning back at ease reading and smoking. When the violin began to play they pricked up their ears, got to their feet, and went on tiptoe to the hall door where they stood huddled together. Their movements must have been heard in the kitchen for Gregor's father called out: Is the violin playing disturbing you, gentlemen? It can be stopped at once. On the contrary, said the middle lodger, could not Fraulein Samsa come and play in this room beside us where it is much more convenient and comfortable? Oh certainly, cried Gregor's father as if he were the violin player. The lodgers came back into the living room and waited. Presently Gregor's father arrived with the music stand, his mother carrying the music and his sister with the violin. His sister quietly made everything ready to start playing, his parents, who had never let rooms before and so had an exaggerated idea of the courtesy due to lodgers, did not venture to sit down on their own chairs, his father leaned against the door, the right hand thrust between two buttons of his livery coat, which was formally buttoned up but his mother was offered a chair by one of the lodgers and since she left the chair just where he had happened to put it sat down in a corner to one side.

Gregor's sister began to play, the father and mother from either side, intently watched the movements of her hands. Gregor, attracted by the playing, ventured to move forward a little until his head was actually inside the living room. He felt hardly any surprise at his growing lack of consideration for the others, there had been a time when he prided himself on being considerate. And yet just on this occasion he had more reason than ever to hide himself, since owing to the amount of dust which lay thick in his room and rose into the air at the slightest movement, he too was covered with dust, fluff and hair and remnants of food trailed with him, caught on his back and along his sides, his indifference to everything was much too great for him to turn on his back and scrape himself clean on the carpet, as once

he had done several times a day. And in spite of his condition no shame deterred him from advancing a little over the spotless floor of the living room.

To be sure no one was aware of him. The family was entirely absorbed in the violin-playing. The lodgers, however, who first of all had stationed themselves hands in pockets much too close behind the music stand so that they could all have read the music which must have bothered his sister, had soon retreated to the window, half-whispering with down-bent heads and stayed there while his father turned an anxious eye on them. Indeed they were making it more than obvious that they had been disappointed in their expectation of hearing good or enjoyable violin playing that they had had more than enough of the performance and only out of courtesy suffered a continued disturbance of their peace. From the way they all kept blowing the smoke of their cigars high in the air through nose and mouth one could divine their irritation. And yet Gregor's sister was playing so beautifully. Her face leaned sideways intently and sadly her eyes followed the notes of music. Gregor crawled a little farther forward and lowered his head to the ground so that it might be possible for his eyes to meet hers. Was he an animal that music had such an effect upon him? He felt as if the way were opening before him to the unknown nourishment he craved. He was determined to push forward till he reached his sister to pull at her skirt and so let her know that she was to come into his room with her violin for no one here appreciated her playing as he would appreciate it. He would never let her out of his room at least, not so long as he lived. His frightful appearance would become for the first time useful to him: he would watch all the doors of his room at once and spit at intruders but his sister should need no constraint, she should stay with him of her own free will. She should sit beside him on the sofa, bend down her ear to him and hear him confide that he had had the firm intention of sending her to the Conservatorium and that but for his mishap last Christmas—surely Christmas was long past?—he would have announced it to everybody without allowing a single objection. After this confession his sister would be so touched that she would burst into tears and Gregor would then raise himself to her shoulder and kiss her on the neck which, now that she went to business, she kept free of any ribbon or collar.

Mr. Samsa cried the middle lodger to Gregor's father and pointed without wasting any more words at Gregor now working himself slowly forwards. The violin fell silent. The middle lodger first smiled to his friends with a shake of the head and then looked at Gregor again. Instead of driving Gregor out, his father seemed to think it more needful to

begin by soothing down the lodgers although they were not at all agitated and apparently found Gregor more entertaining than the violin playing. He hurried towards them and spreading out his arms tried to urge them back into their own room and at the same time to block their view of Gregor. They now began to be really a little angry: one could not tell whether because of the old man's behavior or because it had just dawned on them that all unwittingly they had such a neighbor as Gregor next door. They demanded explanations of his father: they waved their arms like him, tugged uneasily at their beards and only with reluctance backed towards their room. Meanwhile Gregor's sister, who stood there as if lost when her playing was so abruptly broken off, came to life again, pulled herself together all at once after standing for a while holding violin and bow in nervelessly hanging hands and staring at her music, pushed her violin into the lap of her mother who was still sitting in her chair fighting asthmatically for breath and ran into the lodgers' room to which they were now being shepherded by her father rather more quickly than before. One could see the pillows and blankets on the beds flying under her accustomed fingers and being laid in order. Before the lodgers had actually reached their room she had finished making the beds and slipped out.

The old man seemed once more to be so possessed by his mulish self-assertiveness that he was forgetting all the respect he should show to his lodgers. He kept driving them on and driving them on until in the very door of the bedroom the middle lodger stamped his foot loudly on the floor and so brought him to a halt. I beg to announce, said the lodger, lifting one hand and looking also at Gregor's mother and sister, that because of the disgusting conditions prevailing in this household and family—here he spat on the floor with emphatic brevity—I give you notice on the spot. Naturally I won't pay you a penny for the days I have lived here on the contrary I shall consider bringing an action for damages against you based on claims—believe me—that will be easily susceptible of proof. He ceased and stared straight in front of him as if he expected something. In fact his two friends at once rushed into the breach with these words: And we too give notice on the spot. On that he seized the door handle and shut the door with a slam.

Gregor's father groping with his hands staggered forward and fell into his chair. It looked as if he were stretching himself there for his ordinary evening nap but the marked jerking of his head which was as if uncontrollable showed that he was far from asleep. Gregor had simply stayed quietly all the time on the spot where the lodgers had espied him. Disappointment at the failure of his plan per-

haps also the weakness arising from extreme hunger made it impossible for him to move. He feared with a fair degree of certainty, that at any moment the general tension would discharge itself in a combined attack upon him, and he lay waiting. He did not react even to the noise made by the violin as it fell off his mother's lap from under her trembling fingers and gave out a resonant note.

My dear parents, said his sister, slapping her hand on the table by way of introduction, things can't go on like this. Perhaps you don't realize that, but I do. I won't utter my brother's name in the presence of this creature, and so all I say is we must try to get rid of it. We've tried to look after it and to put up with it as far as is humanly possible, and I don't think anyone could reproach us in the slightest.

She is more than right, said Gregor's father to himself. His mother, who was still choking for lack of breath, began to cough hollowly into her hand with a wild look in her eyes.

His sister rushed over to her and held her forehead. His father's thoughts seemed to have lost their vagueness at Grete's words; he sat more up right, fingering his service cap that lay among the plates still lying on the table from the lodgers' supper, and from time to time looked at the still form of Gregor.

We must try to get rid of it, his sister now said explicitly to her father, since her mother was coughing too much to hear a word. It will be the death of both of you. I can see that coming. When one has to work as hard as we do, all of us, one can't stand this continual torment at home on top of it. At least I can't stand it any longer. And she burst into such a passion of sobbing that her tears dropped on her mother's face, where she wiped them off mechanically.

My dear, said the old man sympathetically and with evident understanding, but what can we do?

Gregor's sister merely shrugged her shoulders to indicate the feeling of helplessness that had now overmastered her during her weeping fit, in contrast to her former confidence.

If he could understand us, said her father, half questioningly. Grete still sobbing vehemently, waved a hand to show how unthinkable that was.

If he could understand us, repeated the old man, shutting his eyes to consider his daughter's conviction that understanding was impossible, then perhaps we might come to some agreement with him. But as it is—

He must go, cried Gregor's sister, that's the only solution. Father, you must just try to get rid of the idea that this is Gregor. The fact that we've believed it for so long is the root of all our trouble. But how can it be Gregor? If this were Gregor, he

would have realized long ago that human beings can't live with such a creature, and he'd have gone away on his own accord. Then we wouldn't have any brother, but we'd be able to go on living and keep his memory in honor. As it is, this creature persecutes us, drives away our lodgers, obviously wants the whole apartment to himself and would have us all sleep in the gutter. Just look, Father, she shrieked all at once, he's at it again! And in an access of panic that was quite incomprehensible to Gregor, she even quitted her mother, literally thrusting the chair from her as if she would rather sacrifice her mother than stay so near to Gregor, and rushed behind her father, who also rose up, being simply upset by her agitation, and half spread his arms out as if to protect her.

Yet Gregor had not the slightest intention of frightening anyone, far less his sister. He had only begun to turn round in order to crawl back to his room, but it was certainly a startling operation to watch, since because of his disabled condition he could not execute the difficult turning movements except by lifting his head and then bracing it against the floor over and over again. He paused and looked round. His good intentions seemed to have been recognized; the alarm had only been momentary. Now they were all watching him in melancholy silence. His mother lay in her chair, her legs stiffly outstretched and pressed together, her eyes almost closing for sheer weariness; his father and his sister were sitting beside each other, his sister's arm around the old man's neck.

Perhaps I can go on turning round now, thought Gregor, and began his labors again. He could not stop himself from panting with the effort, and had to pause now and then to take breath. Nor did anyone harass him; he was left entirely to himself. When he had completed the turn-round, he began at once to crawl straight back. He was amazed at the distance separating him from his room and could not understand how in his weak state he had managed to accomplish the same journey so recently, almost without remarking it. Intent on crawling as fast as possible, he barely noticed that not a single word, not an ejaculation from his family, interfered with his progress. Only when he was already in the doorway did he turn his head round, not completely, for his neck muscles were getting stiff, but enough to see that nothing had changed behind him except that his sister had risen to her feet. His last glance fell on his mother, who was not quite overcome by sleep.

Hardly was he well inside his room when the door was hastily pushed shut, bolted and locked. The sudden noise in his rear startled him so much that his little legs gave beneath him. It was his sister who had shown such haste. She had been

standing ready waiting and had made a light spring forward. Gregor had not even heard her coming and she cried: 'At last!' to her parents as she turned the key in the lock.

And what now? said Gregor to himself, looking round in the darkness. Soon he made the discovery that he was now unable to stir a limb. This did not surprise him; rather it seemed unnatural that he should ever actually have been able to move on these feeble little legs. Otherwise he felt relatively comfortable. True, his whole body was aching, but it seemed that the pain was gradually growing less and would finally pass away. The rotting apple in his back and the inflamed area around it all covered with soft dust already hardly troubled him. He thought of his family with tenderness and love. The decision that he must disappear was one that he held to even more strongly that his sister, if that were possible. In this state of vacant and peaceful meditation he remained until the tower clock struck three in the morning. The first broadening of light in the world outside the window entered his consciousness once more. Then his head sank to the floor of its own accord and from his nostrils came the last faint flicker of his breath.

When the charwoman arrived early in the morning—what between her strength and her impatience she slammed all the doors so loudly, never mind how often she had been begged not to do so—that no one in the whole apartment could enjoy any quiet sleep after her arrival—she noticed nothing unusual as she took her customary peep into Gregor's room. She thought he was lying motionless on purpose, pretending to be in the sulks; she credited him with every kind of intelligence. Since she happened to have the long-handled broom in her hand she tried to tickle him up with it from the doorway. When that too produced no reaction she felt provoked and poked at him a little harder, and only when she had pushed him along the floor without meeting any resistance was her attention aroused. It did not take her long to establish the truth of the matter and her eyes widened; she let out a whistle, yet did not waste much time over it but tore open the door of the Samsas' bedroom and yelled into the darkness at the top of her voice: 'Just look at this! it's dead! it's lying here dead and done for!'

Mr. and Mrs. Samsa started up in their double bed and before they realized the nature of the charwoman's announcement had some difficulty in overcoming the shock of it. But then they got out of bed quickly, one on either side, Mr. Samsa throwing a blanket over his shoulders. Mrs. Samsa in nothing but her nightgown, in this array they entered Gregor's room. Meanwhile the door of the living room opened too, where Grete had been sleeping since the advent of the lodgers; she was completely

dressed as if she had not been to bed, which seemed to be confirmed also by the paleness of her face.

'Dead?' said Mrs. Samsa, looking questioningly at the charwoman, although she could have investigated for herself, and the fact was obvious enough without investigation. 'I should say so,' said the charwoman, proving her words by pushing Gregor's corpse a long way to one side with her broomstick. Mrs. Samsa made a movement as if to stop her, but checked it. 'Well,' said Mr. Samsa, 'now thanks be to God.' He crossed himself, and the three women followed his example. Grete, whose eyes never left the corpse, said: 'Just see how thin he was! It's such a long time since he's eaten anything. The food came out again just as it went in.' Indeed, Gregor's body was completely flat and dry, as could only now be seen when it was no longer supported by the legs and nothing prevented one from looking closely at it.

'Come in beside us, Grete, for a little while,' said Mrs. Samsa with a tremulous smile, and Grete, not without looking back at the corpse, followed her parents into their bedroom. The charwoman shut the door and opened the window wide. Although it was so early in the morning a certain softness was perceptible in the fresh air. After all, it was already the end of March.

The three lodgers emerged from their room and were surprised to see no breakfast; they had been forgotten. 'Where's our breakfast?' said the middle lodger peevishly to the charwoman. But she put her finger to her lips and hastily, without a word, indicated by gestures that they should go into Gregor's room. They did so and stood, their hands in the pockets of their somewhat shabby coats, around Gregor's corpse in the room where it was now fully light.

At that the door of the Samsas' bedroom opened and Mr. Samsa appeared in his uniform, his wife on one arm, his daughter on the other. They all looked a little as if they had been crying from time to time. Grete hid her face on her father's arm.

'Leave my house at once!' said Mr. Samsa and pointed to the door without disengaging himself from the women. 'What do you mean by that?' said the middle lodger, taken somewhat aback with a feeble smile. The two others put their hands behind them and kept rubbing them together as if in gleeful expectation of a fine set to in which they were bound to come off the winners. 'I mean just what I say,' answered Mr. Samsa and advanced in a straight line with his two companions towards the lodger. He stood his ground at first quietly, looking at the floor as if his thoughts were taking a new pattern in his head. Then let us go, by all means, he said, and looked up at Mr. Samsa as if in a sudden access of humility he were expecting some renewed sanction for this decision. Mr. Samsa merely nodded.

briefly once or twice with meaning eyes. Upon that the lodger really did go with long strides into the hall, his two friends had been listening and had quite stopped rubbing their hands for some moments and now went scuttling after him as if afraid that Mr Samsa might get into the hall before them and cut them off from their leader. In the hall they all three took their hats from the rack, then sticks from the umbrella stand, bowed in silence and quitted the apartment. With a suspiciousness which proved quite unfounded Mr Samsa and the two women followed them out to the landing, leaning over the banister they watched the three figures slowly but surely going down the long stairs, vanishing from sight at a certain turn of the staircase on every floor and coming into view again after a moment or so the more they dwindled the more the Samsa family's interest in them dwindled and when a butcher's boy met them and passed them on the stairs coming up proudly with a tray on his head Mr Samsa and the two women soon left the landing and as if a burden had been lifted from them went back into their apartment.

They decided to spend this day in resting and going for a stroll; they had not only deserved such a respite from work but absolutely needed it. And so they sat down at the table and wrote three notes of excuse: Mr Samsa to his board of management, Mrs Samsa to her employer and Grete to the head of her firm. While they were writing the charwoman came in to say that she was going now, since her morning's work was finished. At first they only nodded without looking up, but as she kept hovering there they eyed her irritably. "Well?" said Mr Samsa. The charwoman stood grinning in the doorway as if she had good news to impart to the family but meant not to say a word unless properly questioned. The small ostrich feather standing upright on her hat, which had annoyed Mr Samsa ever since she was engaged, was waving gaily in all directions. "Well, what is it then?" asked Mrs Samsa, who obtained more respect from the charwoman than the others. "Oh," said the charwoman, giggling so amiably that she could not at once continue, "just this: you don't need to bother about how to get rid of the thing next door. It's been seen to already." Mrs Samsa and Grete bent over their letters again as if preoccupied. Mr Samsa, who perceived that she was eager to begin describing it all in detail, stopped her with a decisive hand. But since she was not allowed to tell her story she remembered the great hurry she was in, being obviously deeply huffed. "Bye, everybody," she said, whirling off violently and departed with a frightful slamming of doors.

"She'll be given notice tonight," said Mr Samsa, but neither from his wife nor his daughter did he get any answer, for the charwoman seemed to have

shattered again the composure they had barely achieved. They rose, went to the window and stayed there, clasping each other tight. Mr Samsa turned in his chair to look at them and quietly observed them for a little. Then he called out: "Come along now, do. Let bygones be bygones. And you might have some consideration for me." The two of them complied at once, hastened to him, caressed him and quickly finished their letters.

Then they all three left the apartment together, which was more than they had done for months and went by tram into the open country outside the town. The tram in which they were the only passengers was filled with warm sunshine. Leaning comfortably back in their seats they canvassed their prospects for the future and it appeared on closer inspection that these were not at all bad for the jobs they had got, which so far they had never really discussed with each other, were all three admirable and likely to lead to better things later on. The greatest immediate improvement in their condition would of course arise from moving to another house; they wanted to take a smaller and cheaper but also better situated and more easily run apartment than the one they had, which Gregor had selected. While they were thus conversing it struck both Mr and Mrs Samsa almost at the same moment as they became aware of their daughter's increasing vivacity that in spite of all the sorrow of recent times, which had made her cheeks pale, she had bloomed into a pretty girl with a good figure. They grew quieter and half unconsciously exchanged glances of complete agreement having come to the conclusion that it would soon be time to find a good husband for her. And it was like a confirmation of their new dreams and excellent intentions that at the end of their journey their daughter sprang to her feet first and stretched her young body.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Is there any significance in the fact that Gregor Samsa is a salesman?
2. Why does Kafka not have Samsa change into a complete cockroach that is an insect without any human traits at all?
3. What are the different attitudes toward Samsa of the various members of the household? What does each imply?
4. What is the difference between the father-son relationship in *Billy Budd* and that in *Metamorphosis*?
5. To what extent does Samsa understand the implications of his own predicament? What relation does his predicament have to that of man in modern society? Does Kafka suggest any positive answer? Does he suggest any negative answer?
6. Are members of Samsa's family at fault? Does Kafka place any blame upon any person or institution?



7 In what respects would the story have been different if Samsa had changed into a more attractive form of life than a cockroach? Would the story be possible without the physical change?



## The Charcoal Horse

*Edward Loomis*

The novel in company with the other forms of art has been subject in the twentieth century to some very basic changes in structure and point of view. The attitude towards the act of writing expressed by Henry James in his *Art of Fiction* cannot be found among the writers of today not because they do not admire James but because his views are inapplicable to the artistic problems with which contemporary novelists are faced and which they must solve by the use of different techniques.

One of the most striking aspects of the contemporary novel has been the progressive depersonalization of the hero. In the more traditional works of fiction the hero not only had his own particular character marked by unique traits but he tended to represent in his actions and his thoughts classes or types which were more or less representative of the society in which he was created. To the extent that this was true the novel in which he played the major role was able to make a judgment express a point of view uphold a set of values or in some cases exhort the reader to action. With the growing doubt in modern society that there are values to which it is possible or desirable to adhere fiction has become increasingly subjective and to the degree that subjectivity minimizes universality of experience less related to society as a whole. In consequence the personality and particular characteristics of the contemporary hero since they play a decreasing part in the development of the theme have become blurred and in many cases the reader has of the protagonist only the vaguest general outline the minimum required to construct the fictional experience.

In *The Charcoal Horse* Loomis has carried the depersonalization of his hero to what might well be the ultimate. Gillespie is almost a complete cipher indeed he may be said to have no characteristics at all except perhaps a certain cunning and a strong drive for survival. Of his age his background his nationality his family his personality we have no information whatsoever except that we know that for unspecified reasons he is a prisoner in what appears to be a prison in some western country run by the military. It is this faceless and characterless man who becomes through a series of circumstances involved in what has all the outlines of

a serious moral problem which may be understood as that of moral responsibility guilt and expiation.

The technique which Loomis employs is one which derived no doubt from that of Kafka has recently come into critical prominence in France with the writing of such young Frenchmen as Robbe Grillet and Serrault. It represents one of the most interesting departures in prose structure to be found in modern writing and it is therefore of particular interest that this technique should have been taken up in America and related to American literary problems. The technique is that of telling a story entirely from the outside and of thereby creating a reality exclusively from the objective elements of the story and not from any of the collateral materials which an understanding of the society the protagonist or the circumstances would provide. There is therefore a need to eliminate particular reference to time and place to race or religion to nationality or age in order to exclude all elements from the story except those of which it is made—*itself*. Thus in *The Charcoal Horse* we are not called upon to speculate upon the uses of the prison the justice of the hero's imprisonment the reasons for the particular organization the relationship of the organization to the nation or the army of which it may be a part. We are compelled to follow out the workings of the story within the objectivity of the story itself and within no other. This requirement imparts no doubt a sense of frustration and of nightmare which recalls the writing of Kafka and it is interesting to note that in many respects the circumstances of Gregor Samsa who becomes in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* a cockroach are similar to those of Gillespie in that the meaning of the story is to be found in the acceptance of the altered conditions in Samsa's life without understanding or questioning of how they came about. But Kafka differs from Loomis Serrault and the other exponents of this objective technique in one important respect his work expresses a personal reality and the purpose of his fantasies is to shed light upon it. The reality which Loomis expresses which he forges from its own materials which he imposes upon the reader and which limits his material is not a personal one at all but to make the point again an objective one in which the nightmarish quality is only incidental and without function.

One of the problems which Loomis' novel raises is that of whether or not a question of moral responsibility such as that which is at the center of the story can be resolved or even predicated in terms of a moral cipher such as Gillespie. Gillespie's choices founded as they are in utter ignorance of the existence of moral problems and motivated entirely by a visceral shrewdness with respect to his survival cannot of themselves be significant. Morality whatever its nature is the acceptance of the fact that certain values are transcendent and these values in their nature must be drawn from outside the experience. Two conditions in *The Charcoal Horse* make it impossible to consider the morality of the situation Gillespie's emptiness and the structure of the novel itself. Loomis attempts to solve this problem by calling in at the end, the commanding officer to state



the moral problem in neat and clear terms. To what extent this interferes with the experience of the novel is one of the critical problems which the student should consider in his reading.

Some of the other problems which it would be well for the student to bear in mind have been suggested already: the relationship of Loomis' work to the principles laid down by James on the one hand and implied on the other by Kafka. For in coming to a mature judgment concerning this novel the student will be considering a fresh and new approach to the novel: a form of writing which is related to his own present time and a writer who has introduced to the American scene an important and significant contribution to the art of fiction.

But Sir, how can you call the kettle black when you are as black as the kettle is?

Indeed Sir, I find it very easy for in spite of the fact that I am a black pot, he is a very black kettle.

## CHAPTER ONE

THOMAS BIRD GILLESPIE was neither awake nor asleep. He lay on his right side with his arms locked in front of his chest. He was wrapped from head to foot in a single blanket, one man among eighty men who slept or tried to sleep on the stone floor. He was less fortunate than the others only in that he was nearest to the doors. He could see the screen door that opened on the hall; he could feel the winter wind that came in under the big outside door at the end of the hall; the wind passed under the sill of the outside door, not pausing at the locks, and on through the screen door into the room. The eighty men rolled restlessly in the wind; the draft was in their dreams and none escaped it.

Gillespie tried to sleep by locking his eyes shut but the gesture was futile. The cold floor and the cold wind prevented sleep; shivering Gillespie was a bulwark for all the men in the room. He protected the men in the center and he envied them all. He rolled in a slow fit, seeing the doors, feeling the wind, seeing the barred windows; his pained body fitted itself to the prison chills with a simple organic desperation. He longed for distractions.

He tried to find shapes in the darkness above his head but his vision penetrated the darkness without finding any obstruction; he did not look at the windows. In the room with him he could smell the men who slept and he could hear their noises but he could find nothing to attract him. He was pleased at eleven o'clock when one of the guards brought in

a new prisoner; he hoped for diversion. He hid his head under the blanket, leaving a gap for his eyes, and watched.

The guard opened the big door carefully; he rattled the key in the lock and listened as the key slid solidly home. The lock fell open before him and he entered. He beckoned the man behind him to follow.

There it is, he said. Here's your home. The guard walked up to the screen door and flashed his light across the room, looking along the beam. He nodded his head slowly as the light picked out the round sleeping forms. Gillespie ducked his head back into the blanket as the light passed him; he saw the light flicker past and he moved his head slowly forward again.

The guard dropped the beam of light to the floor in front of him and turned to the man who had followed him in. Have you got a blanket? he asked.

No, the man said. No blanket.

The guard lifted his light to the man's chest. You're supposed to have a blanket, he said. What did you do with it?

I never had a blanket, the man said. They must have forgotten it.

Somebody forgot it, the guard said. They're supposed to issue the blanket before they send you over here, Jesus. The guard turned the light upon his wrist watch. Eleven o'clock, he said. The supply sergeant is probably asleep; you'll have to get the blanket in the morning. He swept the beam of light again into the room. Gillespie watching did not flinch; he held his head steady. The guard grinned a little as he looked out into the room.

Maybe one of these guys will let you share his, he said.

The man beside him looked into the room along the beam of light. That's all right, he said. I can sleep standing.

The guard turned away as if he had not heard what the man had said. He tucked his flashlight under his left armpit and stepped to the screen door. He started to fumble with his keys and then he stopped slowly; he stopped his fingers in their fumbling with the keys, retrieved the flashlight and turned around again to the man behind him.

What was that again? he asked. He bent forward, squinting in the darkness above the light in his hand; the flashlight scattered brightness through the narrow hall. The man behind him moved away from the wall. In a clear voice he said:

I can sleep standing.

The guard played the beam slowly from the man's face down to his feet as if in inspection. Then pointing the light at the big outside door he brushed past the man.

Stay here, he said.

He went to the big door and pulled it open; he

leaned out above the sill Anse, he called Hey Anse Come on over here

Gillespie lifted his head but he could not see the door he heard someone answer from outside What is it? Trouble?

No trouble the first guard called from the door Just something I want you to see He gestured with the light In here he said He turned the light back upon the man in the hall centering the beam on the man's middle, he stood back to allow the guard Anse to enter Then they both followed the beam into the hall

Well what is it? the guard Anse asked What do you want Shannon?

Something to see Shannon answered He gestured That right there it's a man who can sleep standing Shannon laughed a little as he spoke the laughter moved quietly in his throat That's all he said Just a man who can sleep standing

For a moment Anse said nothing He moved a little closer to the man in the light and then stopped

Ah, what the hell he said What is this?

Don't you get it? Shannon asked

No I don't get it The guard Anse turned as if to leave I don't get it he repeated

Then wait a minute Shannon said The laughter was gone out of his throat he lifted his hand to bar the way Just wait a minute he said He turned toward the man he had brought in, planted his feet and said Tell us again

The man waited he stood with both hands at his sides He looked down at the beam of light

Go on Shannon said impatiently lifting the light Tell us how you can sleep

The man hesitated Gillespie saw his lips move a little as if he were choosing words Then he said in the same manner as before I can sleep standing

Shannon turned triumphantly away

You see? he asked the guard Anse He says he can sleep standing Now how do you like that?

The guard Anse looked quietly at him for a moment and then he brushed the retaining hand aside

I don't see nothing he said I'm going back to the post He stepped suddenly past Shannon and walked to the door At the door he paused Why don't you let the guy alone? he asked quietly He waited for an answer hearing nothing, he went on

I'll see you later Shannon he said He closed the big door behind him

For almost a minute Shannon did not move nor speak then he turned again to the man behind him

That's too bad he said That bastard don't care about anything He stood uncertainly, playing with the switch on the flashlight the beam went on and off piercing the darkness But I do he said suddenly What's your name man? he asked He had the beam again on the man's middle

Osgood the man answered

Osgood Shannon repeated That's easy to remember What's your first name?

Benjamin

Benjamin Shannon repeated Benjamin Osgood He paused as if he were trying to think of something more to say And where are you from Osgood? What's your unit?

Osgood for a long time had not moved With the last question he shifted his feet and turned his right arm away from his body Infantry Osgood answered His voice had changed his voice had an edge of pride

Gillespie hearing the sudden irritation in Osgood's voice pushed his head out of the blanket and strained his eyes to see more clearly past the beam of light he saw Shannon lift the light and step back one step When he spoke there was uncertainty in his voice Then that's it he said You're an infantry soldier I asked what unit?

Osgood did not answer he twisted his right arm as if to relieve it from the cold He looked steadily at the guard Shannon

Come on! Shannon said angrily I asked you a question What's your unit?

The First Division Osgood answered quietly his voice was almost inaudible the last word dwindled off his tongue into silence Then before Shannon could say anything more, he said The First goddamn Infantry Division try another question He lifted his right hand suddenly to the back of his neck he kneaded the muscles in the back of his neck His whole upper body writhed with the motion With his head down, he asked in a sharp question What are you getting at for Christ's sake?

Shannon lifted the beam of light in a quick reaction of surprise, and crouched forward cocking his shoulders

What are you getting at? Osgood asked again Dropping his hand to his side again he straightened It's late he said You don't have to do this He lifted his head and looked at Shannon above the light Shannon straightened with him the tension flowed away as quickly as it had come The flashlight wavered in Shannon's hand

All I wanted was an answer he said I asked a question and got an answer He waited a moment, and then he said You got no complaint about that do you?

Osgood shook his head No, he said No complaint about that

All right then Shannon said genially He turned the light away from Osgood toward the screen door Let's get on with it Following the light Shannon moved to the screen door Holding the flashlight under his armpit, he selected another

key and set it toward the lock Gillespie withdrew his head when he saw Shannon move, he heard Shannon breathing heavily above him and he heard the key scrape twice against the lock before it clicked home into the keyhole Gillespie rolled away from the door as he heard the door open inward, but he could not move far enough the door in its sweep bounced against him and rebounded a little toward Shannon Gillespie stuck his head out of the blanket directly into the bright beam of light, he blinked and started to rise

Come on get up Shannon said to him Get up and let this man in Shannon turned to Osgood Here you are he said He stood back to let Osgood pass

Osgood walked slowly past him into the room, edging around the door Gillespie holding his blanket like a skirt around his middle moved awkwardly away watching Shannon close the door With the door closed and the lock fixed, Shannon stood back and turned his light upon the two men standing inside He nodded his head

Now you're home he said He turned the light upon Gillespie he scrutinized him carefully before he spoke You he said What's your name? He fidgeted with the light to accentuate his question

Gillespie the answer came Gillespie shivered and wrapped the blanket closer about his body

All right then Gillespie Shannon said How about sharing your blanket with this man? He flicked the light upon Osgood This is a new man who has no blanket

Why sure Gillespie answered 'I'll be glad to

That's fine Shannon answered That's what I like to hear Do it now

I'll do it Gillespie said

Shannon turned his head toward Osgood You see? he said I didn't mean nothing with it I was just asking questions

Osgood nodded his head I see he said

I don't want you men to get me wrong, Shannon said You know I just work here He waited for an answer getting none he continued I got a job that's all He grinned along the light and moved forward to the door Now is everything all right in there? he asked

'Everything's all right Osgood answered

'All right then Shannon said He stepped away

Good night then Good night you sons of bitches He snapped the light out turning in darkness he stepped toward the square blackness of the big door His laughter filtered back from the closing door into the dark hall and on into the dark room the locks snapped shut upon a remnant of his laughter

The two men stood listening to the laughter die away in the big room Osgood alert and angry Gil-

lespie cold in his blanket and worried at his involvement in the trouble Osgood moved first he stepped toward the door and turning leaned his shoulders against it

Well I'll be damned he said He looked toward Gillespie and laughed a little What do you think of that?

Gillespie gathered his blanket higher around his shoulders wrapped it tight and sat down I don't think much of it he said What should I think about it? He stretched out on the floor again, he did not look at Osgood

Osgood looked down in mild surprise, he slipped his hands into his pockets and settled himself against the frame of the screen door That's all right he said I can't figure it either

Gillespie slowly stretched backward to the floor watching Osgood and waiting for the request for the sharing of the blanket Behind him, he heard the steady sound of sleep in the room he thought again of his irritation at being caught near the door for the cold night He looked up again at Osgood and saw that Osgood had relaxed against the door his figure seemed to telescope into itself Gillespie was surprised when the guard had spoken about sharing the blanket, he had offered an advantage to Osgood and now Osgood had refused it Gillespie laughed a little the silent intestinal shiver of laugh used by secretive people in public places but he did it poorly Osgood turned For a moment, he looked down at Gillespie he turned his head away when he was done as if he had seen enough Gillespie watching from within his blanket felt the rejection In his embarrassment he shoved the blanket back from his head and sat up He lifted his right hand toward Osgood

Soldier he said You by the door

Osgood braced himself straight with a quick quiver of shoulder he stood easily watching Gillespie You want me? he asked

You' Gillespie answered I have a blanket if you want a part of it I remember now what the guard said

Thanks Osgood said He lifted one hand from a pocket and waved it away from his hip It's all right he went on It's like I told the guard I can sleep standing

You're welcome to it Gillespie said I'd be glad to share it

Osgood shook his head No, he said I'll try it on my feet tonight

Gillespie rolled back to the floor All right he said I asked you

And I'll remember it Osgood said Thanks very much for the offer He dropped his hand into his pocket again and settled to the wall Gillespie stretched out feeling uncomfortable but satisfied

that he had obeyed the order, he was pleased that he would be able if necessary to satisfy Shannon's questions but he was disturbed by Osgood's easy rejection of his offer. He decided scornfully that it had been pride that caused the rejection. Looking at Osgood he thought idly and without direction of the problem of pride and when his thoughts wandered he made no effort to bring them back. After a time he turned his back on Osgood and stretched his body to the floor, and before he remembered to turn again to see if Osgood was still standing his eyes closed. Before he slept he heard a tram whistle three times in the distance wondering where the tram was going he thought of the cities he knew he thought of London blacked out and all dark in the night but he could not summon sharp images only the pattern of all the streets and his memory of the smell of fog. When he slept he slept soundly.

## CHAPTER TWO

Gillespie woke quickly in the morning on the steady blast of a whistle the whistle carried him to his feet before he could clean the night's sediment from his eyes.

He stepped automatically back from the screen door and saw the tall figure of Sgt Cann before he turned away he saw the Sergeant's cheeks popped outward with his effort the sound of the whistle shattered the heavy rhythmic sound of sleep in the room.

Get up goddammit the Sergeant said lowering the whistle from his mouth. Get up get up' he roared. You have three minutes to make this formation.

The men behind Gillespie began to move, they came at him in an amorphous rush charging and moving faster as they approached the door and Gillespie turned with them toward the door, without thinking. The men behind him carried him on ahead of them but he could not avoid their smell they carried about their bodies the stiff powerful smell of sweat they had a complicated urinary smell in the narrow hall Gillespie gasped as he stepped outside the building into the cold air, and his relief at escaping the smells of the men who followed him dissolved in the fluid sharp cold that met him at the door. He sucked in one lungful of the moist air and then held his breath as he moved to his position in the formation.

He ran from the barracks to his left following prison commands he ran because he and all the prisoners ran everywhere, and he ran to his left because his place in the formation was set inflexibly five yards to the left of the front corner of the barracks. He turned quietly to wait the coming of the

guides who would set the direction of the lines and he saw Osgood moving up behind him. The mass of men came on behind Osgood and Osgood was lost in the swirl of moving men who moved by habit and on the encouragement of the guard Shannon who stood on the top step outside the building. In a loud voice Shannon drove the men before him the four platoons shaped themselves suddenly under his angry urging.

Gillespie at the end of his rank, felt someone moving in beside him to his left and he turned to protest he turned and saw Osgood settling himself slowly into a position of attention.

Are you sure this is your place? Gillespie asked. I'm supposed to be the last man in this rank.

This is as good as any place Osgood answered. They haven't assigned me a regular place yet.

Gillespie opened his mouth to speak against this irregularity but he heard Shannon's voice approaching from the rear and he held his comments uneasy at seeing a departure from the routine but afraid to speak again without hearing of the guard. He listened to the sounds of the movement to the formation across the quadrangle he heard the other companies of prisoners coming down to their places. There was almost no sound now only the voices of the guards and above all the voices the voice of the guard Shannon.

As Shannon moved to the front of the company Gillespie straightened although he was almost out of sight in the rear rank. Once a guard had caught him in a slouch and since that time Gillespie had been wary and correct. Now and then to preserve his personal honor he let one knee relax but that was all. He paid no attention to Osgood he watched Shannon move to the front of the company.

Shannon stepped slowly carrying his rifle loosely in his right hand looking over his shoulder for Sgt Cann. He turned indecisively in front of the company and looked up at the door to the barracks some of the men in the company turned with him watching and a slow stir of sound began to rustle through the ranks. Hearing it Shannon looked down at the company.

Attention! he shouted uneasily. Attention!

The noise stopped momentarily with the order, and then began again as Shannon looked again at the door. Gillespie did not turn his head but he wondered at the Sergeant's absence. Across the quadrangle he could hear the roll being called in the other companies idly, and with a mild expectancy he hoped that the Sergeant would be delayed so that he would be unable to complete his roll call in time for the report to the battalion officer of the day he hoped for anything that might puncture the Sergeant's confidence and provide him with diversion and laughter during the day. He watched Shannon

after an uneasy interval of thirty seconds he saw Shannon stiffen suddenly

Attention! Shannon called Attention!

Disappointedly hearing new confidence in Shannon's voice Gillespie realized that the Sergeant must have come out of the barracks in the silence that followed Shannon's call, he heard the Sergeant's steps behind him. The Sergeant passed between the first and second platoons and out in front of the company where Gillespie could see him. He moved deliberately but more quickly than usual. He checked the company into a strict attention as he turned his heels smacked together to punctuate the command.

Attention! Then he called the roll. He read the names from his list by the light of his flashlight. He turned the light upon each man as he answered. The light, searching out each man in turn, illumined the power of the Sergeant. The light showed each prisoner his position with unanswerable clarity. The Sergeant read each name carefully.

Emmet Erne Falaschi Felix Ferber Garber

Gillespie sturred a little as the penetrating easy voice came closer to his own name. He started to think about his answer. He turned over in his mind the different ways of answering with confidence with cockiness with anger with meekness with firmness and with the mixed meekness and firmness which attracted the least attention. He enjoyed the roll calls. He was able to acknowledge in public his private vanity. The feeling that he was yet a man bearing a name. He knew the names in the list which immediately preceded his own. Garber Garfield Gebhardt Gibbs the rhythm enforced remembrance. When the Sergeant called his name, he was ready.

Gillespie?

Here

The answer was right, the next name, Gruenberg, came quickly. The light did not linger in his eyes. He breathed more easily glad that he had received no special attention and he listened with a lessened attention to the rest of the roll call. He waited for the name Osgood, but until the end he did not hear it. The Sergeant read the familiar list, stopped, and then spoke to Shannon. He looked up and called out a final name.

'Osgood?

Here Osgood answered in a firm solid voice.

Osgood the Sergeant went on. You'll come see me after this formation is over. I want to talk to you a little bit.

'All right Sergeant Osgood answered.

The Sergeant looked up for a moment as if he were memorizing the answer and then he turned in the quick military shuffle to face away from the platoons to give his report, he gave his report loudly. When the call came from across the square, he

answered swiftly pausing a little on each word for emphasis but hurrying through the statement.

C Company all present and accounted for Sir!

Gillespie, hearing the rich vigor of the Sergeant's voice thought a little bitterly of the obvious enjoyment the Sergeant found in giving the report in performing the duty of an officer. He thought angrily of Lt. Camber the company officer still in bed and warm between sheets who by his absence had permitted the Sergeant this pleasure.

After the report the Sergeant turned again to the company, he inspected the lines in a brief glance from left to right, and then he centered his gaze on the second platoon.

I've told you men the Colonel was going to inspect this barracks tomorrow he began. Now I'm telling you again. Before we go to breakfast I want you men to get started. I mean I want you all to do something. I want this barracks to shine. He paused and looked from one end of the line to the other.

But there's one thing I don't want you men to touch in that barracks. The Sergeant straightened a little in the darkness above the flashlight. Gillespie could see his head move and he could hear the change in the Sergeant's voice.

There's a drawing on the wall of the barracks this morning the Sergeant said flatly. It is an improper drawing. One of you men put that drawing on the wall in order to make a joke but no one is going to appreciate the joke. And nobody is going to laugh at it. The Sergeant paused again. He turned his head a little to the side as if listening for noises or comments but there was no sound. And I want you men to leave that drawing alone. Don't touch that wall. He turned to Shannon. You'll see to that Shannon.

Shannon nodded his head. The Sergeant waited for his words to take effect, when he spoke, his voice was calm again.

'Now here's the details for the day.

He started to read the list of work assignments. The men listened carefully not wishing to seek attention by the necessity of asking questions later. Each man wished to remain anonymous. Gillespie's name came up on the detail assigned to cleaning the Colonel's quarters. It was an easy detail and he was pleased. He was still thinking about the warm house he would work in when he got inside the barracks, the lights were on and there was a small group of men looking at the wall to the left of the door. The group broke up suddenly as Shannon came in.

Come on get going, Shannon said. Get away from that wall.

Gillespie suddenly curious turned reluctantly away. He caught only a brief flash of black lines on the wall and he was unable to read the inscription. Most of the men were now trying to start the clean

ing it was the required gesture. A few, seeing little to do in the big room and afraid to move close to the picture, went directly to the latrine. Gillespie remained in the big room. He picked up a scrap of paper near the latrine and then searching for something else to pick up, he moved toward the screen door. Twenty feet from the door, the bright metal end of a shoelace reflected the light from the bulbs in the ceiling. Moving with a hunched and dutiful back, Gillespie walked toward the door. He bent down slowly, picked up the piece of metal and looked up at the picture as he stood up. He gasped suddenly and then he turned away. Scraped with something like charcoal on the wall was a crude drawing of a horse with enormous hindquarters above the drawing, there was an inscription circled with a heavy arrow pointing to the hindquarters of the horse. This is the horses ass, Camber. The inscription was printed in capital letters.

Gillespie, turning, felt a sudden wracking impulse to laughter as he thought of Lt. Camber, now safe in bed but soon to suffer under a general ridicule. Concealment was not possible, and before the day was out the picture would receive the attention of the officers of the prison battalion and all the laughter of the prison. Gillespie started to shape a gun, hiding it under his hand, when he heard Shannon's voice. You there! Get moving and get to work!

Gillespie, startled, looked wildly over his shoulder, and caught Shannon's eye. Shannon lifted his right arm and pointed at him.

Yes you! he shouted. Get going now!

Bobbing his head jerkily, Gillespie stepped away toward the back of the room, already regretting his boldness in looking at the picture. Remembering Shannon's command, he suddenly felt the possibilities implicit in the picture. He realized how his laughter and the laughter of others could extend in fearful ramifications of trouble and disaster, expanding the wrath of Lt. Camber upward through echelons of anger in the prison hierarchy until it could never be called back or completely satisfied. He felt already involved in the trouble after Shannon's reprimand; he knew the prison officials could not pass by a crime of this nature, a picture as big and plain as the one on the wall.

Moving a little unsteadily, Gillespie walked toward the latrine above him. The sound of hurrying footsteps clanged through the old flooring; he thought enviously of the warm wood flooring of the second story and contrasted it with the stone floor he walked on. He felt the cold of the stone transmitted through the damp leather of his shoes, and it reminded him that the men on the second floor would have no difficulties because of the picture on the first floor wall.

He was late getting to the latrine. The seats were

all occupied; the bowls were in use. There was a rank of men before the urinal tray. Gillespie waited behind a man at a washbowl, careful always to protect his rotational turn by staying close to the man's rump. Once someone brushed him from behind and he thought for a moment that he might have to speak for his place, but it was an accident. The man who had brushed him went on out into the main room. When Gillespie's turn came, he woke himself in a splash of cold water and then went to stand in line before the urinal. When he was finished with that, he was ready to face the day. As he left the latrine, he saw the new man, Osgood, entering with a face rigid and stiff with anger. Gillespie guessed that Sgt. Cann had reprimanded Osgood for his brush the night before with Shannon, the guard. Gillespie grinned a little as he passed, pleased that others beside himself had troubles. For a brief instant he forgot the set of apprehensions that centered upon the picture on the wall in his enjoyment of Osgood's irritation and anger.

### CHAPTER THREE

Gillespie worked in warmth all day in the Colonel's house. He cleaned the living room and the front hall. Sometimes when he passed a window, he stopped to look out at the men passing by. They passed the house walking fast and sometimes running with their coatcollars wrapped about their ears and their breath frosting the air before them. Watching them, Gillespie laughed happily and mockingly, feeling the heat from the radiators in the room envelop his body.

The Colonel's orderly, Johnson, pleased him almost as much as the warm rooms. Johnson was remarkably neat and he seemed happy; his face was shaved to a red bareness that reflected the light, but he addressed the prisoners on the detail pleasantly as if they were not prisoners at all.

Gillespie's only worry fell across the picture and the words on the barracks wall. He tried to convince himself that the prison authorities would overlook the offense, but he could not persuade himself. He knew that mockery never pleased superior officers. He could imagine the fearful punishments that would be devised for the man who had made the picture if that man were ever found. He feared that the whole company might suffer through partaking of the punishment as by their observation of the picture they had partaken of laughter. He remembered uneasily that he himself had slept near the screen door, not twenty feet from the picture. He felt an irrational anger that he had chosen this position; he was afraid that he might have to answer questions if there were an investigation.

That night some of his fears came home to him. When he returned to the barracks he found that the picture had been washed from the wall. And after the evening routine of roll call and admonitions by Sgt Cann had been completed the Sergeant called the company to attention and stepped aside for the company officer, Lt Camber. The Lieutenant stepped forward waiting for a moment while surveying the company disapprovingly and then spoke.

'I have an announcement,' he said. He paused and cleared his throat. 'This barracks is in trouble again.'

The lines of men stirred, here and there a man drew breath quickly in anticipation. Sgt Cann heard the noise. 'Attention,' he called. 'Quiet down in there.'

The stir died quickly. The Lieutenant waited when the men were entirely quiet; he went on.

This morning he said, one of you men insulted me publicly on a wall of the barracks. One of you thought it was an amusing joke, but this joke was reported properly to the officer of the day who in turn reported it to camp headquarters. The joke has now come to the attention of Colonel Vopel and the Colonel has ordered an investigation.

The vague stir within the company began again, there was a ripple of sound all along the line. The Sergeant hearing the rise of noise, stepped in ahead of the Lieutenant.

'Attention,' he shouted. 'Attention in there!' He raised his right hand. 'Goddamn it, stop that noise! Stop that noise or I'll run you twenty miles tonight!' His voice ceased abruptly; he rocked back on his heels. The underground tremor of sound stopped with his voice. The men waited suddenly apprehensive for the Lieutenant to continue. He spoke again in a loud, angry voice.

'I'll repeat what I just told you: the Colonel has ordered an investigation. It's a serious matter as you can understand,' he said. 'We mean to get to the bottom of this matter.'

The company of men was quiet. Gillespie could see the men ahead of him standing straighter; he felt the familiar rise of tension and fear in the men around him and in himself.

But for tonight the Lt went on, 'we're holding off. We're giving you all a chance to help us out. We won't start our investigation until tomorrow at noon. If before that time the man who did this thing will come forward, the case will be closed before it starts. Do you all understand that? We are permitting the guilty man to turn himself in.' The Lieutenant turned to Sgt Cann. 'Sergeant,' he said quietly, 'I want you to go over this with the men now. I want them to know we're serious.'

'Yes, sir,' the Sergeant answered. 'I'll take care of it.'

That night and the next morning, Gillespie with all the men in the company waited expectantly for something to happen. Gillespie did not think that the artist would come forward; he only hoped that he would be discovered before an investigation was started. His hopes were frustrated at reveille the next morning. Sgt Cann angrily but quickly announced that no one had come forward; he did not linger on the subject. He immediately began an exhortation on cleaning the barracks for the Colonel's inspection; he asked for dramatic efforts. 'I want it clean,' he said. 'I want it clean. I want that barracks clean and I'll see to it. Remember that Shannon will be watching. See that you work.'

Back in the barracks most of the men worked or tried to work. They were hindered by the lack of tools; there were two brooms and two mops for the first floor. Gillespie picked up scraps near the door but the floor was moderately clean and he could find little to move. Working slowly, looking about him, he saw Osgood standing by the wall. Out of curiosity he moved toward him. Osgood was watching another man working with a broom. While Gillespie watched, Osgood asked the man for the broom.

Here, he said, 'I'll go it awhile now if you like.' He grinned a little and stretched out his right hand in a tentative motion to take the broom. The other man, an Italian named Nicoletti, shook his head.

'Naw,' he said. 'I'm doing all right.' He turned away and Osgood dropped his arm and turned his head toward Gillespie. Seeing the motion, Gillespie said, 'That's the way it goes.' He nodded at Nicoletti. 'These men like to work.'

'I see that,' Osgood answered. He looked at Gillespie more closely, as if he recognized the voice and face but as if he were not certain. Gillespie nodded his head at him.

'It's me all right,' he said. 'I'm the one with the blanket.'

Osgood stepped forward as if to look more closely. 'Why sure,' he said. 'I thought I recognized your voice.' He smiled pleasantly. 'I'd like to thank you for that offer,' he said, and took another step toward Gillespie.

Gillespie was about to answer when he saw Shannon coming out of the latrine toward the front of the room. Shannon was watching him. Gillespie dropped his left hand to his side and motioned with it away from his hip toward Osgood and then turned away to the blanket shelf. Shannon called to him as he turned. 'You there,' he called.

Gillespie hesitated, and then stopped slowly he turned to face the guard.

'You there,' Shannon called again. 'You heard what the Sergeant said, didn't you?'



There was no proper answer to this question Gillespie stood waiting

The Sergeant said he wanted you men to shine this place, and he didn't say he wanted to see any body standing around There's plenty to do Do it Short and heavy Shannon stood looking at Gillespie Shannon was an ordinary looking man and an ordinary looking soldier There was a blot like an inkspot on his cartridge belt but he stood heavy with authority Now go on he said Get a little work done He watched as Gillespie moved toward the blanket shelf

Gillespie walked slowly trying to maintain his dignity but he felt Shannon's contempt running up and down his back as he walked away

I won't even take your name you're lucky Shannon concluded

Gillespie watching the wall not wanting to see Osgood or anyone else took one of the blankets from the shelf shook it loose and started to fold it again He tried to bend his entire attention upon the blanket He refolded two more blankets before the call to breakfast

At the breakfast formation Osgood was assigned a permanent position he was told off for the third platoon He took his place beside Gillespie who carefully avoided looking in that direction He was still full of his humiliation and he nourished a feeling of resentment toward Osgood because Osgood had not also been reprimanded In the messhall Osgood sat beside Gillespie both in silence according to the standing order for prisoners in the messhall

The breakfast that morning was better than usual and Gillespie began to feel better as he ate There was oatmeal toast and coffee The oatmeal was thin but hot and the coffee was strong and hot Gillespie gulped his coffee rinsing down the harsh phlegm from his throat and with it the sour taste of winter morning He drank his first cup quickly and prepared to drink a second although sometimes the prison coffee affected his kidneys unpleasantly in the prison he preferred warmth to any other luxury available to him He hurried with his meal so that he could linger over his second cup As he picked up his cup tasting the hot rim of the cup and the hot syrupy drink within it he heard Osgood mutter something in his direction Since talking was forbidden the prisoners in the messhall he was surprised and frightened but he turned his head a little so that he could see Osgood He gazed at him tentatively to indicate that he was listening

Tough break Osgood said softly He lifted a spoonful of oatmeal to his mouth and while he swallowed he said Sorry to make trouble for you

Gillespie nodded his head as much to stop Osgood from saying anything further as to agree with him Gillespie turned his head around to the front

again and picked up his cup he heard steps coming quickly toward him down the aisle from behind Instantly he thought that they were the footsteps of the Sergeant they were heavy but quick and buoyant But it was Shannon the guard He did not call out as he approached he said nothing after he arrived until he got his breath He stood behind Gillespie waiting Gillespie could feel his presence watching he could see the other men at the table looking beyond him with impassive faces After they comprehended the situation they looked straight ahead each as if there were a puzzle or a pretty woman in the air above Five tables away Sgt Cann drinking a cup of coffee looked up to watch

You again Shannon said suddenly He packed a measure of disgust into the two words Stand up! He rapped Gillespie on the shoulder with the knuckles of his left hand

Gillespie stood up slowly waiting for Shannon to challenge Osgood, but Shannon bent his whole attention on Gillespie As he rose Gillespie could feel his left knee ache where he had ripped a tendon playing football in high school he could feel the great muscles in the thighs contract with tension he could feel the eyes of all the men in the room rise with him The sounds of eating declined into attention Because the bench had been pulled toward the table after the men sat down Gillespie could not stand straight He was forced to bend his knees and as a result the line from his hips to his shoulders was crooked

Stand at attention! Shannon said He did not say it loudly he said it with pride Gillespie tried to straighten up by bending his knees and he succeeded in moving the bench back a little

You can't stay straight an hour can you? Shannon said And you know the rule about talking in the messhall Don't you?

Gillespie knew the question had to be answered but for a moment he lost his voice he felt a trickle of sweat roll down his back inside his belt

Yes he answered

All right then Shannon said You know the rest of the rule Get to it Up and down in place until I tell you to stop

As he finished speaking Osgood twisted around in his seat and touched the guard's sleeve

Say he began and hesitated, not knowing how to address this man who had authority but no title

Guard I ought to tell you Before he could finish Shannon pulled his arm away from Osgood's touch

No talking he said I know you To Gillespie he said Come on get started

Then Gillespie forgetting his hope that Osgood would be forced to share in the punishment had to

start moving as he had been directed up and down from his seat bending at the knees as fast as he could move. It was a common punishment but Gillespie had never undergone it himself; he had seen it often. He was embarrassed because he was awkward; everyone watched him. The first time he bent down he knocked a spoon from the table to the floor and he hesitated uncertain whether he should stop to retrieve it. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Shannon lift his hand; he continued.

After the first five or six bends he lost his embarrassment and he began to have a little conscious anger as he felt the sympathy in the eyes of the other men at the table. After he had bent down fifteen times his knees and the muscles in his legs began to stiffen. It was early morning and there was no heat in the messhall, he was sweating inside his clothes but the cold in the room worked on him at the same time. He thought about the way the woolen underwear would feel when he had cooled off; he thought of the cough he might take with the sudden cold when he stopped, and all the time he felt the physical agony increase. His anger increased with the agony, as he felt the justification in his legs and back and stomach, grow larger. He felt the food he had eaten and the coffee he had drunk swirl in his stomach with the pain in his body; he began to notice in his belly the slow turn of nausea. Each time his buttocks hit the bench he rose more slowly. Once he slipped so that the base of his spine struck the hard wood. He was sagging when the guard spoke.

All right, he said, you can stop.

Gillespie rose slowly part way after he spoke and then he dropped back. He stretched his legs under the table in a wracking luxury of relaxation. He sat without moving again until the company left the messhall. As the muscles in his stomach relaxed, the feeling of nausea, familiar and loathsome increased. He tried to control it. He wondered vaguely how long he had been jumping in the painful dance, and he decided that it must have been more than two minutes; he could hardly believe it.

He was tired and sick and his defenses fell away. The nausea rose toward his throat and it sucked all his attention inward but he could feel the sympathy of the other men at the table. By the time the company stood up to leave the messhall his muscles had recovered enough so that he could forget them in his effort to choke the nausea. The nausea was a familiar feeling but for that reason its course was predictable. Above all he did not want to be sick; it would be a greater humiliation than all the rest. As he left the messhall in the orderly file his breath came more easily and his stomach muscles stopped twitching. The cold morning air helped more than anything. It was still dark and the fog was heavy in

the air. For a moment before the company started trotting again away from the messhall, as he pumped the heavy cold air in his lungs he felt sound and wholesome again but when he started running the nausea came on swiftly rising. It was four hundred yards back to the barracks and it was too much for him. When the Sergeant called the halt his throat opened and he retched. He ducked back so that he would not soil the man ahead of him, and he fell to his knees as if before a familiar toilet bowl in his own home. As he bent forward, Osgood took him by the shoulders and held him even as his stomach turned. Gillespie was grateful for the comfort of it and for the solicitude behind the gesture.

He retched twice and with the great pressure gone, he felt better immediately; he felt so clean that he was not even embarrassed in his weakness. By this time the company had broken up into the work details but Osgood remained behind. Gillespie blew his nose, holding with the fingers of his right hand below the bridge of the nose. He caught the foul smell as he stood up. He turned around and saw Osgood standing watching him. In the relief and comfort he felt he did not remember to resent Osgood as the agent of his troubles.

Feel better? Osgood asked.

Gillespie grunted and nodded his head. He turned again to blow his nose and saw Sgt. Conn standing about ten feet away. He was watching with a pained look, smelling the vomit. The smell was oppressive in the heavy air.

That's a hell of a mess, the Sergeant said slowly. He kicked a wet clod of mud toward the spoil on the ground. I want that mess off the ground before the Colonel comes around. The Sergeant paused and looked down at the ground. And what's your name? he asked.

Gillespie blew his nose deliberately before answering. Gillespie, he said.

Well, Gillespie, you go clean yourself and then clean up this mess. The Sergeant turned away shaking his head. Jesus, it stinks, he muttered as he walked away.

Gillespie watched him go. He had narrow sharp shoulders that moved only slightly as he walked. His legs were a little bowed. Gillespie felt almost defiant as he faced up to his departing back; he remembered with a little surprise at his daring that he had blown his nose before he had given his name. He felt almost cocky as he stood there in the cold morning.

The son of a bitch, he said very quietly and turned back to Osgood. The son of a bitch.

Osgood was still looking at the darkness across the square where the Sergeant had gone. I think so, he said. He looked at Gillespie. You go on and clean yourself up. I'll clean this up.

Don't you have a detail? Gillespie asked sharply.

Not right away. They haven't put my name on all the rosters yet. Go ahead. He seemed embarrassed. He paused a little and then went on. Hell, it's my fault anyway. You let me clean this up.

Gillespie nodded his head. All right, he said. Thanks.

And you better go before that Shannon comes out. You might say something wrong if you see him now.

Gillespie was pleased with this statement. He felt almost formidable in his injury. He felt as if he were armed in his indignation.

I might at that, he said slowly. That bastard makes trouble all the time.

He looked down at the ground he had spilled his breakfast on and spat. He felt full of righteousness. For an instant he felt invulnerable. He blew his nose again and cleared a part of the foul smell from his nostrils and then started toward the barracks, hurrying a little as he remembered that he had a detail to make that morning. He slapped his belly and felt it solid and firm once more. He remembered that he had been assigned again to the detail for cleaning the Colonel's quarters. He felt a little better but he could not rid himself of the black memory of public humiliation.

At the door to the barracks he turned to see what Osgood was doing. He stood where he had stood before with his eyes on the ground, shuffling a crust of mud before his foot. As Gillespie turned away, Osgood kicked the crust of mud away from him and started for the corner of the barracks. He departed into the morning darkness as Gillespie watched.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Gillespie found Johnson, the Colonel's Orderly, with two other men inside the barracks. Johnson seemed to know what had happened and he seemed patient.

Go ahead and clean up, he said. But hurry.

All right, Gillespie answered. I'll hurry.

He went back to the latrine and washed himself. In a brief inspection afterward he could find no evidence that he had fouled his clothing so that when he had gargled and cleaned his nose thoroughly he was again presentable. Only a smell was left and he could do nothing about that. He went back to the detail feeling bruised but still jaunty.

On the way to the Colonel's house, trotting on the hard ground, some of his resentment came back. The appearance of the house itself bothered him. The brick walls with their windows were blank and empty. The house inside was bleak and clean. Gillespie resented the extensive cleaning this house received. A cleaning that surpassed the cleaning his own body received. He allowed his face to carry a

sullen expression as he followed Johnson inside. He clamped his teeth tightly as he listened to Johnson's instructions.

Well, Johnson began, what we want to do is shine this place up. He bent down and touched the floor, nuzzling its polish with his fingers. Mainly we want to shine this floor. The Colonel likes a shiny floor.

Despite his proud and general resentment Gillespie nodded his head with the others in consideration of this comment.

And that means wax. Johnson went on. It's downstairs in the cellar. Also we want to wax this woodwork. It hasn't been done since last week. He looked around him at the men. And that's the job he went on. That's what we have to do.

All the men nodded their heads again.

I get it, one of them said.

Sure, Gillespie added. We all get it.

That's fine, Johnson said. Let's go get the wax.\*

Gillespie spent all that morning waxing the floors and woodwork on the first floor of the Colonel's house. In spite of himself he enjoyed the work a little, smelling the acrid clean smell of the wax, watching the wood take a glow under his cloth, but he could not disperse his resentment and anger. Thinking of the foolishness of this constant and enduring cleaning of the barren house, his anger grew and flourished. Now and then he remembered the obscenity on the wall and the investigation and his fear of the investigation compounded his anger. He stroked the wood viciously, striking vaguely at the Colonel through the Colonel's house.

At ten o'clock Johnson took him upstairs for a few minutes to show him the work for the afternoon: the Colonel's bedroom. At first Gillespie was worried and anxious at being in the sleeping room of the commander of the whole post, but he got over it quickly by summoning his bitterness. He inspected the room rapidly for the interest it had for mementoes of the Colonel. He looked at everything. The only object he could find that belonged personally to the Colonel was a large framed photograph tinted of the Colonel's family. It was framed in glass fourteen inches high and ten inches wide. The photograph showed the Colonel's wife and two children. The wife appeared to be about forty-five years old, smiling into the camera, both boys wore the uniform of a military academy. The inscription ran across the page in a single line: To Father with love, Annie and the boys. All the faces were blurred under the tinting.

Gillespie inspected the photograph carefully while Johnson was in the hall, the photograph irritated him. Until that time Colonel Vopel had been primarily an object of hate. Now he became a man with observable connections to an outside world. In

the guardhouse he was the subject of rumor and calumny it was said among other things, that he sometimes kept women in his quarters. The photograph denied the comforting rumor. Gillespie always liked the rumors and encouraged them and for this reason the photograph troubled him. He became conscious, bitterly, of the undeniable fact that neither he nor any other prisoner was permitted a photograph of any sort. He turned quickly away from the photograph with the smell of vomit still about him and poor prospects ahead of him it was painful to look into that domesticity. He felt all alone without any support without any happy chances to look for in the future and he hated the Colonel. He left the room feeling that he was being driven out and pursued by the picture.

At noon that day Sgt Cann told the company that the Colonel's inspection had been moderately successful. Colonel Vopel had found nothing severely wrong or filthy in the barracks and Sgt Cann was pleased with this success, but he did not show it. He said nothing whatever about the diagram on the wall and Lt Camber was not present at the formation but after lunch Gillespie saw the first prisoners leave for their interrogation. Gillespie carried this worry with him to his work in the afternoon and when Johnson came in five minutes late to meet his detail accompanied by Sgt Cann Gillespie was alarmed. He wondered if he had done his work improperly that morning. He felt better when Johnson beckoned to him and to the other waiting men. Johnson smiled upon them. Come on over, Johnson said. When the three men reached him Johnson turned to the Sergeant. Here they are, he said, but I need one more Sergeant.

'Another man?' the Sergeant asked. Isn't three enough?

Johnson grinned at him. It might be enough, he said, if we had all the time we need. But the Colonel wants quick action. You know how the Colonel is when he wants action. Johnson nodded his head soberly. The Colonel likes to see things jump.

I know, the Sergeant said with a wave of his hand. I know how it is. He looked around the room. I think I can give you another man. There's a new man who hasn't got anything yet this afternoon. The Sergeant looked around the room. Osgood was standing in the door to the latrine watching. The Sergeant waved to him. You, he called. 'Come over here.'

Osgood nodded his head and started forward. The Sergeant watched him come then he pointed to the orderly. You'll go with Johnson here, he said to Osgood with these other men. You're going to work in the Colonel's Quarters. Turning to Johnson he said. Is that all right Johnson?

That's fine, Sergeant, Johnson answered. Thanks very much.

The Sergeant waved a hand and turned away.

In the Colonel's house Johnson assigned the men to their separate tasks. He assigned Gillespie and Osgood to the Colonel's room and set the other two men to finishing the waxwork on the first floor. After watching the men on the first floor begin their work, Johnson turned to Gillespie and Osgood.

There's something a little different this afternoon, he said. The Colonel wants some wallpaper cleaned, all the wallpaper in his bedroom. Looking curiously at them he said. You all know how to clean wallpaper, don't you? Neither of the men said anything. Johnson continued. Anyway I'll be there. We're using sponges. You go on up there and I'll bring the sponges up right away.

Osgood followed Gillespie to the Colonel's room. While Osgood looked curiously about him Gillespie went to the window. After a moment Osgood came over and stood behind him.

Not much of a view, is it? he said.

Gillespie waited while he drew breath twice, and then he said, carefully. It's a hell of a view. It's a lousy view.

Osgood laughed. That's right, he said. I don't like it either. He paused after he said this as if he were waiting for Gillespie to continue. After a while he went on. I can tell you now I'm sorry about this morning, he said. It was a hell of a thing.

It sure was, Gillespie said. He nodded his head and let his eye wander carelessly over the gray buildings outside in the winter light. He had a sure advantage. Osgood had made trouble for him and under the system of the prison he had no right because he had no authority. Gillespie allowed himself a feeling of resentment and contempt while he waited for Osgood to continue. He transferred his resentment for the moment from the prison hierarchy to his fellow prisoner.

'I didn't think it was that bad in here,' Osgood said quietly. I'm just learning how bad it is.

Gillespie heard Johnson coming up the stairs and he turned from the window and brushed past Osgood. 'It's plenty bad,' he said as he went by. 'I'd have thought you would have figured that out on your first night.'

Johnson came in bearing two big sponges and a bar of yellow soap. He was smiling like an industrious housewife.

We can get started now, he said. Here's the sponges and all. His smiling face and brisk happy voice awakened the two men out of their private irritations. Osgood looked up at him in mild astonishment and watched him set the sponges carefully on a chair beside the bed. Johnson straightened and

looked at Gillespie. There's a bucket in the bath room. Johnson said. Fill it for me will you?

Gillespie brought the bucket back filled with hot water. It was blue in the clean bucket. He set the bucket down in front of Johnson and Johnson started without comment to shave the yellow soap into the water. He cut the soap with a pocketknife and the soap split cleanly away from the broad blade. Johnson showed enjoyment of the simple task.

All we got to do is stir this up for a while, he said. This soap will clean anything.

It better clean anything, Gillespie said. It's a good thing the Colonel has hot water.

Johnson looked up. That's right, he said. The hot water makes the work a lot easier around here. He grinned a little. The Colonel keeps a man jumping anyway. He sounded pleased that the Colonel held to a strict cleaning discipline. It increased his natural respect for the Colonel. In everything Johnson did in that house, he displayed his great respect and admiration for the Colonel. Watching Gillespie felt like challenging this manifest belief with ridicule or humor, but he refrained because Johnson was a pleasant man who had done him no harm and because he controlled an easy job.

When the soap had melted a little in the water in the bucket, Johnson filled and squeezed out a sponge. When the sponge stopped dripping, he applied it to the wall in a long vertical sweep.

That's the way, he said. You got to keep the sponge dry or the paper will come off.

Johnson cleaned three strokes of wall and then Osgood offered to take the sponge. Johnson surrendered the sponge and stood back to watch. He nodded his head and smiled approvingly as he watched Osgood.

That's fine, he said. You boys'll be all right. Then he went downstairs. Gillespie and Osgood could hear him talking to the men below. They started working quietly, not talking. Osgood did not offer any more conversation and Gillespie was still enjoying his resentment. He enjoyed it the more because it had some effect. Osgood, a fellow prisoner, could not be indifferent, and he felt the awkwardness of his position. Gillespie guessed that Osgood was still thinking as if he were a patient in a hospital, as if he needed no defenses. Gillespie had been a prisoner long enough to comprehend his imprisonment.

By the time they had exhausted the first bucket of water, Gillespie was ready to talk again. His resentment toward Osgood wore quickly in the small room. He began to think of the actual indignity done to his person that morning in the messhall. Osgood as the indirect agent had little to do with that, he gave no orders. It was the private of the guards, Shannon,

the man with the blotch on his belt, who gave orders and the tall Sergeant and the company officer and the hierarchy above them culminating at last in the Colonel whose walls he cleaned. Gillespie turned his attention toward them. He directed his resentment again in that direction. Looking heavily up at the framed photograph of the Colonel's family, he grunted and threw his sponge in the bucket.

We need some more water, he said. We need some more water to wash the Colonel's goddamn walls.

Osgood looked up. I guess so, he said, a little reluctantly. We're not doing any good with this.

I'll get it, Gillespie said. He stood up awkwardly, rocking until he found his balance. But what the hell, he said. Anyway we've got good sponges. He lifted his sponge from the bucket, squeezed it out, and tossed it in the air, catching it as it came down. The Colonel has the best of everything, he added.

Osgood watched him curiously and then he grinned also. Sure he does, he said. He has a good orderly.

Gillespie, seeing an opportunity to wipe out his earlier extravagances, said. That's the way with Colonels, they all have good orderlies. He waited for a moment and then went on. And sometimes that's all they have anywhere. He touched his head above the ear.

Osgood laughed, and Gillespie laughed with him, the tension between them eased out of the room. Gillespie felt free to attack the Colonel. He picked up the bucket and turned to look at the framed photograph. He lifted his free hand and pointed at the photograph.

You can see it there, he said. Look at that family, look at the kids in the fine uniforms with the belts. He laughed derisively and looked to Osgood for approbation. Osgood turned with him and looked the picture over. He inspected it carefully as if he were searching for reasons to approve it.

It seems like a good picture, he said. I like the colors.

Gillespie was disappointed but he did not show it. He changed the direction of his attack. If it is all right, he said, even if it is all right, think about this. You don't have any pictures. You don't have a picture. Isn't that right?

Osgood nodded his head slowly. That's right, he said. They took them away from me when I came here. He leaned back against the wall and looked up at Gillespie. But I got myself in here. It was my own doing.

I suppose you did, Gillespie said. I suppose you got yourself in here just the way we all did. How long were you out when they caught you?

Thirty six hours Osgood answered reflectively  
That's right thirty six hours in Liverpool

That's just right Gillespie said I was gone twenty four in London I had a twelve hour pass before I got on the tiam for the front and the division again And now I haven't even got a snapshot He looked up at the big framed photograph Id like to spit in her eye he said Oi in the Colonel's eye He looked down to see Osgood's reaction Osgood had not moved he was looking up steadily

You could try it any time Osgood said slyly 'The Colonel will probably come home this afternoon He gunned silently up at Gillespie Nothing to it he said

Gillespie dropped his hand uncertain as to what to do next he was surprised He looked rapidly from Osgood to the picture the woman's paper smile poured out at him from the wall He felt that Osgood had challenged him but that he could find no way to meet the challenge he felt ridiculous as if he had been caught stealing buttons in a ten-cent store He stepped toward the picture the blank smiling faces beckoned him on For a brief instant he thought of spitting on the photograph but he rejected the thought with a sudden loathing and in his anger at himself and at his frustration he swept his right hand awkwardly toward the picture in a gesture of irritation and futility he was off balance and the bucket in his left hand made him awkward he fell forward so that his right hand brushed the picture from its place on the chest of drawers The picture toppled slowly sideways and Gillespie lunged after it but he could not reach it, the picture turned once in the air and struck the bare floor on its face, with glass shattering each way free in bright pieces on the floor Gillespie was stunned After the crash the room was suddenly incredibly silent he felt his heart drumming and drumming in the silence

It seemed to him that the whole house was quiet He looked once mutely at Osgood as if for inspiration and then he bent to the floor and the broken picture Panting, feeling his breath hot in his throat he swept the fragments of glass together down below he heard footsteps moving toward the stairs and then he heard Johnson's voice calling as if from a great distance

Hey up there the voice called What happened?

Gillespie crouched back on his haunches he gasped once and said Nothing! He waited and cleared his throat thinking only how he could keep Johnson below stairs It's nothing at all he said The bucket caught his eye in the center of the room where he had dropped it I dropped the bucket he called That's what it was

'All right then Johnson called uncertainly Then in a surer voice Be careful of the floor

Gillespie heard the footsteps move away again from the stairs He looked at Osgood who had not moved from his position leaning against the wall

Jesus Gillespie said O my Jesus Christ

He bent again to the broken picture he lifted the frame from the floor and turned it over the print had been cut sliced neatly by glass so that the woman's head was separated from her body the paper flared outward from the frame He stood up and set the picture back on the chest of drawers propping it on the hinged support he tried to imagine that it was not damaged and that it might pass for perfect if the cut were taped up but he had no success the picture was clearly ruined, the frame was knocked askew When he saw the picture damaged on the chest he bent again to the floor and started to collect the fragments of glass He worked feverishly once cutting the thumb of his right hand on a sharp edge He snapped his forefinger against the thumb and looked around at Osgood

Christ he said How about a little help here?

Osgood bent his knees in a rapid smooth motion and pushed himself to his feet All right he said But what's the hurry? It's only a picture

Gillespie lifted a hand in a gesture of caution unconsciously raising a finger to his lips Easy easy he said Keep it quiet My God only a picture! He looked at Osgood They'll crucify me for that picture if they find out!

Together they collected the fragments of glass Gillespie went to the bathroom and took several sheets of toilet paper to wrap the glass in he folded the broken glass into a tight knot in the soft paper and then stood with it in his hand looking at the frame and the print standing on the chest of drawers He felt calmer with the floor free of fragments he tried to think what he should do next Osgood went over in front of him to examine the picture after a few moments of careful scrutiny he turned around

She's a goner he said cheerfully You sure did bust her! He laughed a little You looked funny as hell falling like that He shook his head Funny as hell His hard face brightened with his laughter

Gillespie waited until Osgood had turned to him and was watching him, then he shook his head slowly setting his lips neatly and firmly

No he said It's not funny at all There's nothing to laugh at not even for you He paused, watching Osgood's attention come to him You were in the room when it happened They'll get you too They'll get us both if we don't figure something out You can bet the Colonel will figure it he said bitingly He'll have it figured out you can count on that the son of a bitch The words came out fat

and emphatic The son of a bitch, Gillespie repeated The profanity loosened the tight knot of worry that was forming in the region of his stomach He repeated the words over in his head feeling a little daring but knowing that he was safe for the moment cursing inaudibly in the small room You seem pretty sure Osgood said then What do you think you can do about it?

I don't know what I can do about it, Gillespie said I just know something's got to be done

It doesn't seem like much Osgood said Just a broken picture

It's enough Gillespie said It's plenty

You could say it was an accident Osgood said You could say you knocked it over while you were reaching past it to the wall Why not say that?

Because it's the Colonel's picture! If he knew he'd break our backs for it he's the big man around here Gillespie shook his head violently No Nothing like that He paused he hefted the weight of the glass and paper in his hand it made a compact and cohesive mass One thing he said We could throw this glass out the window I think it would hold together We could throw it out behind where nobody would notice it That's one thing we could do

But that leaves you the picture still You can't throw that out the window

Gillespie slumped a little his shoulders sagged toward his chest I guess not he said Then he stopped and looked suddenly around the room I don't know he said I don't know about that Why we could hide the goddamn picture we could hide it right in this room just so we get out of here just so we get out before anybody notices it's gone Then we wait it out If anybody asks us we say the picture was all right when we left Hell I could tell them I looked close because I liked the picture and the Colonel's family! He laughed and smacked his thigh with his left hand Sure sure, he went on That's fine Nothing to it He looked out the window They'd probably think the orderly did it and then hid the picture because he was afraid to lose his job And we're out from under Now how about that? He looked to Osgood for approval again he was genuinely pleased with his plan He watched as Osgood turned and walked to the door Osgood opened the door and stuck his head out for a moment to listen then he turned around, closing the door behind him

I think you ought to report it as an accident he said abruptly He looked steadily at Gillespie as he spoke I think that's what you'd better do

But it won't work I told you that They'd crucify us both

That doesn't make any difference Osgood said I think you ought to report it as an accident

Even when I've got this other way? Even then?

Even then Osgood said Maybe more then

You're crazy Gillespie said coldly You're crazy You don't know this place you just came here You don't know what you're talking about

I know what I'm talking about Osgood said You want to put it all off on the orderly I can see that clear as anything

On somebody Gillespie said He permitted himself a slight smile There's got to be a goat somewhere for it

On the orderly then Osgood said And what did he ever do to you?

On him because he's here my God who else?

Osgood leaned on the door closing it the bolts slid home under his weight He shook his head I don't think you ought to do it he said The fingers of his right hand opened and closed moved from open fingers to closed fist He was not a big man but he did not look small his body filled his clothes in a proper proportion I don't think you ought to do it he repeated I don't think I ought to let you do it He waited a moment and then he said I saw what happened

Gillespie nodded his head and leaned forward And you could tell it is that right too?

That's right I could tell it Osgood said it with out flinching I think maybe I'll have to tell it

Gillespie started to step forward and then he stopped changing his mind He was angry and he was puzzled by Osgood's reaction He rocked back on his heels

Then that ties it he said quietly That winds it up He turned around and looked at the picture he touched the flap of paper that stuck out from the frame He looked over his shoulder toward Osgood

I want you to look at this picture, he said You'll see later what it can do when it gets some help He turned around and faced Osgood I guess this morning wasn't enough he said You want to nail me right this time don't you?

Osgood snapped his mouth shut with a little gasp while Gillespie watched him he dropped both hands to his sides No he said That wasn't it at all

Of course not Gillespie said It was an accident You had nothing to do with it

I didn't say so Osgood answered I didn't say that

I know what happened Gillespie said I still feel it all the while you sat there eating your breakfast Gillespie rocked on his heels watching Osgood He grinned across the room Now you want to finish the job he went on You've got a good start

Osgood stepped suddenly forward as if upon an



uncontrollable spring he held both hands before him clenched His jaw was set I'll tell you something he said as he reached the middle of the room He stopped You're all wrong! You're wrong and I want you to know it!

Gillespie stopped rocking he set his feet solidly on the floor and lifted his hands cautiously Maybe so he said You may be right You're in a position to prove it

Is that all? Osgood asked Is that all you've got?

That's not quite all, Gillespie answered You're from the First Division aren't you? he asked quickly I heard you say that the night they brought you in

Osgood hesitated before answering Then he said Yes I'm from the First and I'm proud of it

All right then Gillespie said I'd like to ask you to do something for me When this is all over take my regards to the boys in the Eighteenth Regiment you can tell them all about Tom Gillespie He straightened a little, waiting for his effect

The Eighteenth Regiment? You mean you're from the Eighteenth?

That's what I mean and since Sicily too Tell them that

Osgood shook his head and then looked across at Gillespie That's the truth? he asked

That's the truth I could tell you about that regiment for twenty years and never say the same thing twice He looked over at Osgood I haven't changed my mind he said I think I'll put the picture in the Colonel's chest of drawers The glass goes out the window

Osgood turned away and went to the door He opened the door and blinked at the light coming from the hall window Then he turned around All right he said I made trouble for you this morning we're from the same division maybe I owe you something Anyway it's not my business what you do go ahead He shook his head and tucked his hands in his pockets But you're wrong he said You're all wrong

Gillespie turned away feeling his triumph over his shoulder he answered I don't know anything about that I have my own troubles He walked to the window and looked out the window opened on the front of the house and street He decided to throw the glass out of another window Leaving the picture where it was he stepped past Osgood into the corridor He threw the glass out the window at the back of the hall the bundle of paper and glass landed in a clump of bushes out of sight Gillespie turned away from the window still feeling like a winner Everything looked easy to him, the terror he had felt was gone and in its place was a feeling of confidence that filled him to the remotest corners He

had not been so successful with anything since he had entered the prison he also rejoiced because he had been given an opportunity to impose his will on another

On his way back to the Colonel's bedroom he calculated his next move he favored the chest of drawers as a hiding place for the torn picture He found Osgood where he had left him, standing by the door

Half done Gillespie said cheerfully as he went by The glass is in a bush in the backyard He stepped carefully past Osgood as if he were a dancer in a ballroom He felt skittish and frisky he felt as if he had no more responsibilities than a colt in a meadow He stepped up in front of the picture looked at it carefully and then picked it up He bent down and opened the second drawer from the bottom the drawer was filled with socks and underwear The socks were rolled and the underwear was folded neatly Gillespie dropped the picture on top of a stack of underwear and then stood up

I won't even hide it he said Just drop it in there He bent down and started to close the drawer, but seeing the orderly rows and stacks of clothing brought home to him the implications of his action meddling with the Colonel's belongings he was meddling with the Colonel himself Suddenly in the image of the wrathful Colonel his confidence departed it left him feeling a little sick He shoved the drawer shut with his right foot and turned quickly away the right leg was trembling He went quickly to the center of the room and picked up the bucket

We still have to work, he said to Osgood in an uncertain voice We can't get away from that He opened the door and went to the bathroom for more hot water The Colonel's toothbrush hanging neatly in a wooden rack reminded him again of the picture lying face down in the drawer, he drew the water quickly and went back to the bedroom He went silently to work and he worked as hard as he knew how He concentrated on the wall before him and now and then forgetting the broken picture he felt almost comfortable with his sponge and his hot water He did not look at Osgood who worked quietly at his side he noticed only that Osgood stayed ahead of him without hurrying The house after a while became quiet with the men in it moving slowly and smoothly about their work At three o'clock Gillespie and Osgood had almost completed the last wall and Gillespie leaned back to survey his work He heard Johnson moving below and then after a moment he heard the downstairs door open He heard Johnson step quickly toward the door and then he heard Johnson shout in the army abbreviation 'Attention'

Heavy large steps rocked into the house Gil

Gillespie jumped to his feet and Osgood turned toward the door.

Jesus, Gillespie muttered. I'll bet it's the Colonel.

Osgood did not say anything. He picked up his sponge and turned to the wall. Gillespie followed him, listening to the voices below. Johnson was not talking now; it was another voice and the voice carried authority. He could pick out only an occasional word from the quiet murmur of sound, hearing steps moving through the house; he turned to Osgood.

It's the Colonel, he whispered. Making an inspection, O Jesus. His comfortable confidence fell apart inside him as he listened to the stately murmur of questions in the powerful soft voice. The prison and the prison's terrors walked into the house and his heart with the Colonel; he waited for the steps to mount the uncovered stairs. Five minutes later the steps started up the stairs and the tramp of shoes on the stairs was accompanied by the respectful voice of Johnson, explaining and apologizing. Waiting in the room, Gillespie did not know what position to take for the Colonel's entrance. He looked to Osgood, but Osgood was busy with his wall as if he heard nothing as if he knew only the wall and no other thing. Gillespie stood uncertainly, preparing his shoulders and legs for the position of attention he would shape himself in.

Johnson pushed the door open before the Colonel and the Colonel came in. Again Johnson shouted too loud so that his voice bounced from wall to wall in the small room. Attention!

Gillespie and Osgood straightened stiffly with the sponges held awkwardly in their hands. Gillespie heard water dripping from his sponge and he wondered if the Colonel would notice. It might show that he had been working devoutly or it might show punishable slovenliness. He loosened his grip on the sponge and the dripping stopped. The Colonel walked into the center of the room, and stood with his hands on his hips, looking at the walls. His gaze did not touch either Gillespie or Osgood. Johnson watched him, frightened a little by his silence. The Colonel was a short man and he had a small hard belly that bulged below his blouse so that the belt on the blouse was above the meridian of his belly. He had a narrow face and a round red nose; the nose rotated through the room as the Colonel slowly turned his head. The Colonel looked at the three finished walls and then he stopped rotation of his head. He was looking directly at the chest of drawers. Gillespie felt his left leg start jumping inside the trouserleg and he tried to stop it but the jumping continued. Gillespie, watching, saw the Colonel cock his head a little to the left as if he were trying to catch some difficult odor. The motion was almost imperceptible but the Colonel's presence filled the

room for almost a minute he was silent. When he spoke his voice was soft.

Johnson, he said. What's that goddam smell in here?

The Colonel turned his head upward and around so that his gaze could take in Johnson and Johnson was stunned; he could think of nothing to say to this accusation. The Colonel fastened his gaze upon Johnson's face. When Johnson did not answer, the Colonel cocked his head even farther back and drew his eyebrows together. Well, don't you smell it, Johnson?

Johnson shook his head very slightly. No, sir, he said. He looked unhappy.

Well, I smell it, the Colonel said. And I don't like it. He looked away from Johnson down at the buckets. In one bucket there were several slices of the yellow soap dissolving in the clear water. What kind of soap have you been using in here, Johnson? the Colonel asked.

Johnson brightened a little. The regular kind, he said. The same as always. The conscious bracing in Johnson's neck began to relax; he had answered a question successfully. The Colonel paused.

I don't think it's the soap anyway, he said. It smells rotten in here. He paused again and dropped his hands from his hips. He turned slowly on his widespread feet so that he faced Johnson with the whole force of his compact ugly body. His face was unreadable. You know, Johnson, he said slowly, this is the room I sleep in. I think you appreciate the fact that I can't sleep in this room when it smells like this.

No, sir, Johnson answered.

And I will not sleep in such a room. I want this room correctly and fully laid out at all times. The Colonel looked at his watch. It is three o'clock now, he went on. I shall return at the regular time this evening. When I return I shall expect to find this sick smell gone and the room in order. He bent his head a little and squinted at Johnson as if to make a point clear which had been hidden before. Is that clear now, Johnson? he went on. You will stay here and see to it, Johnson.

The Colonel looked once more around the room. Then he swung about and marched out.

Yes, sir! Johnson called after the departing back. The Colonel continued down the stairs. Gillespie and Osgood stood absolutely still until they heard the door close downstairs behind the Colonel. Then they broke the position of attention. Gillespie noticed immediately that he was sweating. He felt the sweat trickling down from his armpits. He stamped his left foot on the floor to stop the shaking in his leg. His throat was very dry. He could not believe that the Colonel had been in the room without noticing that the picture was gone; he tried to interpret the Colo-

nels statements and he tried to interpret and penetrate his memory of the Colonel's impassive face but he had no luck with either. He felt sick as he had felt sick in the messhall that morning. He looked at Johnson who had turned to the door the Colonel had just passed through.

Jesus! Johnson said. Jesus! He shook his head and then he turned again into the room. Do you men smell anything? he asked. They both started to move as if upon command searching for the ugly smell. Osgood shook his head.

I don't smell anything, he said.

Johnson looked at Gillespie.

I don't either, Gillespie said.

Johnson was baffled. He lifted his right hand to his forehead and wiped the back of his hand across his forehead under the hairline. I don't smell a goddamn thing, he said at last. Osgood laughed uncertainly at the expression and then looked at Gillespie who started a laugh and then stopped as he saw Johnson looking around the room. For a moment, Gillespie feared that Johnson would discover the absence of the picture but Johnson's gaze travelled in a distraught and unperceptive circle. He was smelling the air. He was not looking for anything.

What happens now? Gillespie asked.

Johnson shook his head. I don't know, he said. I just don't know. But you heard what the Colonel said.

At the mention of the Colonel Gillespie suddenly felt the sweat that had formed on his forehead. He lifted his right hand aping Johnson's gesture to his forehead. In doing it the sleeve of his shirt scraped against his chin and as it passed he caught the smell of vomit. O Christ! he said aloud. Osgood and Johnson looked quickly at him.

What's the matter? Osgood asked Johnson waited for the answer.

Gillespie winced a little under their eyes. Simultaneously he saw it all. He had not cleaned that sleeve properly. It had been touched with vomit in the morning, and he had failed to notice it. Only the Colonel without knowing its source had noticed it and with it perhaps something else. Gillespie could not bring himself to answer to the smell however he put his right hand in the deep pocket of his trousers the compendious pocket held his hand his wrist the offending sleeve. Nothing, he said. I was just thinking what will happen when the Colonel comes back. He met Osgood's eyes without flinching. Johnson nodded his head.

That's what we're all thinking about, he said. He turned his troubled eyes away. Gillespie started to think about ways of cleaning the sleeve, he decided quickly that it would be easy. Then Johnson stepped to the window.

But this isn't doing anything, he said. He un-

latched the windowlock and opened the window. The cold winter wind opened into the room. Gillespie shivered.

That's the right idea, he said. Air the place out.

And scrub the floor again, Johnson said. We're going to have to hustle. Maybe we can get rid of whatever it is.

Osgood stepped toward the window in front of Johnson.

When will the Colonel be back? he asked.

Johnson looked up at him. That's the problem, he said. It could be any time the regular time could be any time.

Osgood nodded. We might as well get started then, he said. Then they all started to work. Johnson began with a brush and hot water on the waxed and shining floor and he worked hard in a quiet frenzy on his knees in the cold wind. At the first chance he got Gillespie went to the bathroom after water and cleaned his sleeve. He felt honest as he cleaned the sleeve as if he were doing a just and honorable thing. They finished neatly at five o'clock. Osgood applied the last stroke with a wet rag on the closet wall. They left the room to dry and went outside into the hall.

That's it then, Johnson said. That's all we can do. He stood for a moment at the door, with his nose wiggling like a hound's and then he beckoned to Gillespie. You smell it, he said. See if it smells different.

Without entering the room Gillespie bent forward from the threshold. It smells all right to me, he said. It smells like soap.

Johnson looked appealingly at him. You think it'll be all right then?

If the Colonel likes soap it'll be all right, Gillespie answered.

Johnson nodded his head in a serious gesture. It's soapy enough, he said. He bent once more into the room and then turned resolutely away. That's all then. I think we've done all we could. I'll have to take you boys back to your barracks.

Outside in the cold air Gillespie felt a tremendous relief. It felt to him like the end of school in the spring. He choked down all his apprehensions in his great relief. He was even glad to trot on the way back to the barracks. The cold smoky air cold at first and then burning in his lungs made him feel momentarily clean again. In the barracks for the first time he welcomed the doors shutting behind him as if they were shutting the Colonel out. He felt protected. He sat down in a corner away from Osgood, and tried to think about the evening meal. He did not notice the flat caress of bare stone that passed through his clothes as if he were wearing no clothes at all.

## CHAPTER FIVE

That night Gillespie waited for something to happen. He watched the prisoners going and coming from the interrogations of Sgt. Cann and Lt. Camber, the men going out apprehensively and slowly behind the guard and returning quickly and quietly to the room afterward. They went out two at a time. None of them talked about the interrogations after they returned. Each time the doorlocks clicked and opened, Gillespie turned in a twist of fear, waiting for his name to be called and filling up on fear each time a guard entered without calling him. For a long time he was afraid to ask questions, but finally he sought out Nicoletti, the little Italian who had been working with the broom in the morning, a bald little man who sometimes had information when others had none.

Gillespie had once helped Nicoletti unsnarl a knotted shoelace before a reveille formation, and Nicoletti had been grateful. He showed his gratitude occasionally beyond normal requirements by asking Gillespie for opinions on prison questions and prison rumors, and then listening attentively. Gillespie had always accepted this flattery with a mild pleasure. In his search, Gillespie went through the big room from group to group, looking for the bright and bobbing bald head, but he did not find Nicoletti in the main room; he found Nicoletti in the latrine, standing tentatively before the urinal. Gillespie was pleased to find Nicoletti in this comparative privacy; he walked up beside Nicoletti and nudged his shoulder as he went by. Nicoletti, he said, 'Hey Nicoletti.'

Nicoletti turned his head with a quick uncertainty flaring in his eyes; he grinned a little when he saw Gillespie. 'O,' he said, 'It's you.' He turned his head quickly to look around the room; there was one other man in the latrine and he was leaving. He looked up attentively at Gillespie.

'How's it going, Nick?' Gillespie asked. The position was unfamiliar to him; usually it was Nicoletti who sought him out. Because he maintained a mild contempt for Nicoletti, he was uncomfortable and hesitant about asking questions.

All right, Nicoletti said. 'How's with you?'

Gillespie shrugged his shoulders. 'Like always,' he said. 'I don't know what's going on here.' He turned away from the urinal, and Nicoletti turned with him. Nicoletti looked once more about the room and then moved closer to Gillespie.

'There's something up,' he said. 'I'll tell you that. He put on a look of mystery as if he were concealing dangerous knowledge. You bet he went on. There's something up.'

'You mean the picture on the wall?' Gillespie asked with a smile. 'I know about that.'

'That's it,' Nicoletti said quickly. 'That's what it is.'

'That's nothing then,' Gillespie said with relief. 'That's nothing to me.'

'You think it's nothing,' Nicoletti said a little resentfully. 'But I heard some of the other guys talking. He looked up at Gillespie with wide-open brown eyes; the lids were retracted. Gillespie could see the eyeball complete in each eye. The face worked with the knowledge the mind contained. Nicoletti nodded his head gravely three times. 'Yeah,' he said, 'I heard some guys talking. He touched Gillespie's sleeve as if asking for more questions, but Gillespie pulled away; he felt a rise of confidence in watching Nicoletti, and in thinking that the profane picture was the only catastrophe working its way through the prison. For a moment he wavered between letting Nicoletti go and holding him for his information. He felt that if he let him go, he could build his troubled vanity with a gesture, but he held him.'

Well, he said. 'What did you hear?'

Nicoletti was pleased; he shuffled nearer and looked once more around the room. 'All right,' he said. 'I heard the Colonels been over here tonight to see the Lieutenant.'

Gillespie felt a sudden shiver at the base of his neck; the shiver travelled down his back. He shook his head. 'What was that again?' he asked.

Nicoletti was pleased with his effect. He nodded his head again. 'That's something new!,' he said. 'What do you think of that?'

'It's something,' Gillespie agreed. 'Did he come alone?'

Nicoletti shook his head. 'I don't know,' he said. 'I didn't hear anything about that.'

Do you know why he came?'

Nicoletti looked up a little surprised. 'Why sure,' he said. 'I've already told you the picture on the wall. Why else would he come over here?'

Gillespie nodded his head quickly in agreement to forestall any questions that Nicoletti might put to him.

Sure, he said. 'That's it. I guess there will be real trouble now with the Colonel interested.'

Maybe so, Nicoletti said. 'He can put on the heat all right.'

The door to the latrine opened and one of the prisoners walked in. Nicoletti turned away and went to one of the washbowls.

'I got to wash up,' he said over his shoulder. Before they close this place up. He turned on a faucet and dipped his hands in the running water. Gillespie, seeing that Nicoletti wanted to stop talking, turned and went out of the latrine. He took his blanket from its place on the shelf, found a place near the wall, and spread the blanket on the floor. He wrapped himself carefully in the blanket and closed his eyes.

but he found that he could not sleep he could not even keep his eyes closed He thought about the vengeful Colonel sweeping the room for him venting his omnipotent wrath upon him he felt like a proper target for that vengeance He rolled slowly from side to side, wide awake for three hours before he slept

The next morning, Gillespie Osgood and the other two men who had been on the work detail in the Colonel's house the day before were called aside by Sgt Cann after the reveille formation All the men were frightened by this departure from custom and routine, Gillespie more than the others because he thought he knew what was going to happen He was almost resigned to disaster he centered his feeling of apprehension on what the Sergeant would say When they came before the Sergeant they stood at attention each man hoping that his flattery might help him Osgood hesitated at first but then he followed the example of the others The Sergeant inspected each man with his flashlight in accordance with his habit before speaking

I suppose you men know why I called you out he began At least you ought to know He turned his flashlight on Osgood

Do you know? he asked

Osgood did not hesitate No he said I don't know

The Sergeant held the light steadily in his eyes You're sure you don't know?

I'm sure Osgood answered

The Sergeant dropped the light and stood without speaking for a moment Then I'll tell you he said He spoke directly at Osgood I called you out because you men are going on a special detail for the rest of the week He waited and then he said

Colonel Vopel ordered it He said you men did a very poor job in cleaning his quarters The Sergeant played his light quickly over the faces of all four men You men know what that makes us look like it makes us look bad The Sergeant drew himself up

We don't like that kind of attention He pointed the beam of light at Osgood Do you understand that? he asked

I understand it Osgood answered He paused for a moment as if he were choosing words for an important declaration Then he said The Colonel put the heat on you you're in trouble too

The Sergeant's mouth snapped shut in a gesture of surprise 'I didn't ask for an opinion he said savagely I asked for an answer and that's all I asked for He stepped forward one step and then stood straight with his feet separated widely Don't give me anything else Don't get clever with me The Sergeant looked suddenly down at the papers in

his hand, then with one finger marking a place he said You're Osgood aren't you?

That's right Sergeant Osgood answered mildly That's my name

I'm going to remember you, Osgood the Sergeant continued You've given me two reasons already for remembering you Then he turned the beam of light upon the other men And I want all of you to do the same he said the anger was still in his voice Watch what you say when you answer a question!

The men stood rigidly at attention before him all somewhat astonished at Osgood's small rebellion and resentful because they feared the Sergeant would exact retribution for this offense from them all Gillespie was further troubled because at this time more than ever he wished to avoid all official attention he wished to remain anonymous a name and a number on a roster The Sergeant waited for thirty seconds in a rhetorical pause before he continued

This detail won't be pleasant at all he said You're going to get all the dirty work we can find It's a disciplinary matter and we are going to treat it as a disciplinary matter And you're going to work If I hear of any loafing I'll see that something is done to stop it and stop it quick Is that clear to all of you?

The Sergeant watched the heads nodding with his light he forced a reluctant nod from Osgood He seemed satisfied with the response You'll fall out together after breakfast and wait for the morning guard, he concluded He'll have you for this detail Now get on inside and start cleaning up the barracks

The special detail started unpleasantly that morning The task assigned was to clean up after a broken sewer pipe The pipe leading away from the toilets in one of the other barracks, had been exposed by a roadlevelling operation and the blade of a bulldozer had split it open The cut was vertical it opened up five inches of pipe The contents of the pipe had run for ten hours after the accident into the frozen mud of the roadside the men on the detail worked for an hour and a half at cleaning it up with shovels and one wheelbarrow After that, until noon, they cleaned out by hand all the grease traps in the kitchens of the big messhall Of the four men Gillespie worked the most diligently he hoped that a good report would go back to the Sergeant about his efforts he did not wish to miss any opportunity to establish his innocence by his industry

He avoided Osgood because Osgood was an open rebel and because Osgood knew where the broken photograph lay At the same time with each passing hour he wanted to talk about his troubles, he wanted reassurance that his trick would be success

ful, that if it were not successful he might still escape the punishment or that the Colonel would not miss the broken picture. He cheered himself for a brief moment with these hopes. He knew that the only man he could talk to was Osgood; he was sure he could trust Osgood. By noontime he was anxious to find an opportunity to talk to Osgood, but he had no chance until late in the afternoon when they were working outside clearing the ditch at the side of a newly surfaced road. This work was normally assigned to prisoners in good status, because the work was out in the open and honest, but the special detail goaded sharply by the guard found the work difficult and exhausting. They had only one rest period at four-thirty for ten minutes and it was at this time that Gillespie approached Osgood. Remembering his last talk with Osgood, Gillespie was careful with his approach; he feared a rebuff. He waited until Osgood sat down and then he sat down facing him about three feet away. After looking toward the guard and seeing the other two prisoners talking quietly, he leaned toward Osgood.

It sure is cold, Gillespie said. 'I'm freezing.

Osgood looked up at him for a moment and then looked down again at his shovel; he paused for a moment, and then he looked up again. It's cold enough, he said. But I like the fresh air.

Gillespie eagerly leaned forward pushing a smile on before him. Yes, he said. That's one good thing about the job. He relaxed back into his previous position, pleased that he had made a successful entry; he sat without speaking, waiting for an opportunity to come to the point of his effort, his own troubles. He watched Osgood. Osgood sat at ease, resting well with his shoulders slumped down around the shaft of his shovel. Gillespie watched the guard until the guard's back was turned and then he began again.

That was pretty good this morning, he said softly. He waited until Osgood looked up. You really told the Sergeant this morning, Gillespie went on.

You really told him, Gillespie nodded his head up and down in a gesture of approval, holding his face rigid in its grin and thinking at the same time how he wished that Osgood had kept silent that morning. Osgood said nothing; he nodded his head a little and Gillespie took it for a sign that Osgood was willing to listen. I wonder why they put us on this detail? Gillespie asked and this time he waited for an answer. Osgood jerked his head up.

There are plenty of reasons, he said. I can think of plenty. Gillespie bent his head before the straight stare in Osgood's eyes but he did not give up his intention.

You think the Colonel found the picture? Gillespie asked. He looked up again, hoping for anything

that might encourage or aid him. Osgood looked at him with all the expression withdrawn from his eyes as by a conscious effort, by a well measured restraint.

I don't know about that, he said. I know what they tell me and they told me that we didn't clean the Colonel's quarters the way the Colonel wanted them cleaned.

Gillespie nodded his head in agreement as if he missed the implications of what he had heard.

That's what they told us, he said. But I can't help wondering.

Osgood, listening with his head down, looked up with a grin tightening the corners of his mouth. I'll bet you can't, he said. I'll bet you're wondering. You've got all the reasons a man could ever need for wondering. Osgood slowly dropped his head and paused. But you no more than any of us, he said slowly. We're all caught in it now. He shook his head and then started to get up as the guard called them. He braced to his feet on the support of the shovel and turned to his work; he tipped his shovel against the frozen crust of the bare ground and drove it home with a hard kick of his right heel.

## CHAPTER SIX

That night at seven o'clock Gillespie was called out for questioning about the drawing on the barracks wall. Shannon, the guard, called his name from outside the screen door loudly three times and then waited impatiently, knocking once on the frame of the door to hurry him on his way. Gillespie hurried after stumbling once and almost falling over the legs of a man wrapped in a blanket; he trotted quickly to the front of the big room. He followed Shannon with a swift attentiveness as if he were going toward a meal or a cup of whiskey. He tried to forget his anxiety so that he could perfect his following motions but Shannon did not once look around. Gillespie spilled his evidences of discipline upon an unheeding back; his good intentions were dissipated in the cold night air.

As they entered the narrow tarpaper building that served as an office building for the prison officials, Gillespie began to feel a little resentment as he remembered that Shannon had punished him in the messhall; he felt a little relief as he thought that in a moment Shannon would have to deliver him to someone else.

Shannon took him inside the building and instructed him to wait in the hall before a door. Shannon took a chair from the end of the hall, propped his rifle against a wall and sat down. Watching Gillespie, he lit a cigarette; the smoke drifted in long lines through the close air of the hall.

You wait there, Shannon said. They'll call you in after while.

Gillespie stood awkwardly in the middle of the hall looking from the door to the wall the door was set in. He did not look at Shannon. He guessed that Shannon was trying to worry him with the tobacco smoke. The smoke was acrid in the narrow hall. Gillespie was afraid that Shannon might play an unpleasant game with him in order to pass the time. He shifted his weight from foot to foot and listened to the voices coming from the room behind the door. He recognized the voice of Sgt. Cann, and now and then he heard the voice of Lt. Camber. He heard an unfamiliar voice answering questions, but he could not hear all the words spoken. The voices were talking about charcoal.

He felt a strong relief when, after five minutes in the hall, the door opened and Sgt. Cann came out into the hall. Gillespie was relieved to escape Shannon for a time.

'You can take this one back,' the Sergeant said. 'We're done with him.' He stepped back and a prisoner, in the familiar green cottons, slid respectfully past him into the hall. Gillespie recognized his face but he did not look long at him. The Sergeant looked past Gillespie at Shannon, who was on his feet now.

'Who's this?' the Sergeant asked.

His name's Gillespie, Shannon answered. The next on the list.

The Sergeant waved a hand at Gillespie. Come on in, the Sergeant said, and turned into the room.

Gillespie followed him. For a moment he was ready to salute the officer he knew he would find there, but he remembered in time that the privilege of saluting had been removed from him, and he held his right hand at his side. The room was small. It held a wooden desk and two straight-backed chairs. Lt. Camber sat behind the desk, and Sgt. Cann was lowering himself into one of the chairs. Gillespie walked uncertainly into the room and stood hesitantly in front of the desk under the open bulb in the ceiling that lighted the room. He felt the light along the upper rims of his eyeballs. Lt. Camber was looking at the upper sheet of a shelf of papers on the desk. Gillespie, not wishing to show undue curiosity, did not look at the papers. He looked at the wall behind the Lieutenant, and at the door in the wall that opened into another interior room. There was a small woodstove in the corner of the room behind the desk, and its heat filled the room. Gillespie began to sweat.

When the Lieutenant looked up from the papers, Gillespie straightened tighter in his position of attention.

Gillespie, the Lieutenant began. You know why you're here. We're investigating a drawing that

appeared on a wall in your barracks. That drawing constitutes an offense. It is an offense in itself, and it is a breach of discipline. The Lieutenant paused for a moment as if he were remembering a memorized set speech. In addition, that drawing has come to the attention of Colonel Vopel, he went on. And Colonel Vopel wants us to find the prisoner who drew that picture. Is the situation clear to you, Gillespie?

Yes, sir, Gillespie answered.

Before I ask any questions, I'll tell you one more thing. As I've told all the men who have been questioned here, that I'm not forgetting that my name was attached to that drawing. Anyone who helps me find the man who made the drawing will be remembered. Do you see what I mean, Gillespie?

Gillespie nodded his head to indicate a complete understanding. Yes, sir, he said.

And I can be very harsh, too, Gillespie, on any one who obstructs my investigation. And I will be harsh if I find that harshness is required.

Yes, sir, Gillespie said.

All right, then, Gillespie. Now where were you sleeping on the night the drawing was made? That was three nights ago, Monday night.

Gillespie was quick with his answer. I was sleeping right near the door, sir. Near the inside door.

Did anything wake you during the night, Gillespie?

No, sir. Only when the guard brought in a new man.

And when was that?

I don't know exactly, sir. I guess about eleven o'clock.

The Lieutenant turned to Sgt. Cann. Do you remember that, Sergeant? he asked.

The Sergeant ran his hand through his hair and then he said, 'I think so. We haven't had any since then.'

The Lieutenant turned again to Gillespie. Do you know who that new man was, Gillespie?

I think his name is Osgood, Gillespie said.

The Sergeant looked up from his chair. He had the chair tilted back. He looked up sleepily and then with interest. You think his name is Osgood? he said.

I think so, Gillespie answered.

You ought to know, the Sergeant said. You've been with that man on details for two days now. Haven't you?

Gillespie waited a moment before answering and then he tried to recall his mistake. That's right, he said. I forgot it. He nodded his head. Yes, sir, he said. His name is Osgood.

That's it, Lieutenant, the Sergeant said. I remember now. This man, he pointed at Gillespie, 'and Osgood were on that detail that messed up the



Colonel's quarters Jesus he added looking at Gillespie you've got a hell of a memory!

Gillespie felt the heat of the stove come strongly to him He wavered a little on his feet waiting the reference to the Colonel's quarters terrified him The Lieutenant watched him closely

That's odd he said to the Sergeant You wouldn't think he'd forget a thing like that would you?

I wouldn't think so the Sergeant said

How about that Gillespie? the Lieutenant asked Why did you forget a thing like that?

Gillespie shook his head I don't know sir I just forgot it

Did you have a reason for forgetting it Gillespie?

No sir No I had no reason I just forgot it that's all

You're sure of that Gillespie?

Yes sir I'm sure

It didn't have anything to do with that drawing did it?

No sir It just slipped my mind

The Lieutenant waved his right hand above the desk in irritation All right he said You forgot it Now did anything else wake you during the night?

Gillespie relieved said quickly No sir There was nothing I noticed

Did you hear any sounds that were strange to you?

No sir After the new man came in I went to sleep and I didn't hear anything

All right Gillespie the Lieutenant said Now He paused and leaned forward above the desk Did you draw that picture on the wall? Did you do it? Did you put up that obscenity?

Oh no sir! Gillespie said Feeling his complete innocence of this charge, he filled his voice with all the candor at his command No sir I didn't do it He hesitated while he decided whether he should say that he could not commit such a crime he decided to say nothing He stood straight swaying a little in the heat of the small room

I'm asking you right out Gillespie the Lieutenant said Don't lie to me

I wouldn't lie to you sir Gillespie said

Then I'll ask you again did you make that drawing?

No sir Gillespie said firmly

The Lieutenant grunted and looked down at his papers again He looked up as he heard a door opening outside in the hall He waited as the sounds of footsteps came closer to his door

I suppose that's Shannon with the next one he said He gestured with his right hand at Gillespie

That's all for now Shannon will take you back to the barracks

At the knock on the door the Lieutenant called Come in

There was a momentary pause and then the door opened Gillespie turning from the Lieutenant's desk stopped as the door opened he saw not Shannon the guard but Johnson the Colonel's Orderly He turned quickly away from the door hiding his face he saw Sgt Cann rise from his chair The Lieutenant was surprised but he sat up as Johnson marched from the door to his desk Johnson stepped up beside Gillespie

Private first class Johnson reporting sir he said He saluted the Lieutenant and remained standing at attention Gillespie feeling in the way stepped aside shutting awkwardly from foot to foot he saw the Lieutenant's right hand touch the air near his forehead in a surprised return of the salute

I'm reporting at the order of Colonel Vopel Johnson said For duty sir

Gillespie stood at an angle from Johnson but he could see him The Lieutenant gestured toward an envelope which Johnson held in his hand

I don't understand he said Colonel Vopel sent you?

Yes sir Johnson said Here's a note from Colonel Vopel

He dropped the envelope on the desk and snapped back into his position of attention The Lieutenant picked up the envelope looking at the typewritten name on the envelope and then turned to Sgt Cann

Sergeant he said Take this man Gillespie out of the room will you?

The Sergeant stepped toward the door Come along he said to Gillespie He opened the door and went out Gillespie followed him passing behind Johnson thankful that Johnson was dutiful in not turning his head to watch as he left the room he heard the Lieutenant say

You may stand at ease Johnson

Gillespie closed the door behind him and looked toward the Sergeant who was standing just beyond the door

You wait here the Sergeant said Shannon will be here soon

All right Sergeant Gillespie said

The Sergeant looked at him with a vague irritation and then went back into the room Gillespie anxious to hear what was happening in the room but afraid to listen at the door moved down the hall away from the door he hoped that when someone came out his exemplary conduct would be clearly evident He hoped that someone would notice that he had not eavesdropped but his illusory feeling of virtue dissolved in a sense of disaster he could not

escape the presence of Johnson and the question which formed itself around Johnson's presence. Away from the door he could hear voices but he could not identify the speakers. After a minute he had almost persuaded himself that he should try to hear what was happening but as he started toward the office door, Shannon entered the building with another prisoner. Gillespie stopped suddenly and leaned toward the wall as if he were only shifting his feet for comfort. Shannon came in behind the prisoner, closing the outside door behind him. He walked to the door, listened for a moment, and then looked toward Gillespie.

'What's up?' he said quietly. 'What's going on in there?'

Gillespie stood away from the wall, with his heels together; he shook his head.

'I don't know,' he said. 'They've finished with me.'

'Did you talk to the Lieutenant?' Shannon asked.

'Ever since you left,' Gillespie answered. 'He just sent me out.'

'Do you know who's in there now?'

'I think it's Johnson, the Colonel's Orderly. He just got here.'

'Johnson?' Shannon said. He turned away a little, bewildered. 'I wonder what he's doing here,' he said to himself, then he turned to the prisoner he had brought in. 'You go up there with that other man,' he said. 'Wait up there.' He turned again to the door, listened again, and then turned away toward the chair he had placed earlier. He leaned his rifle carefully against the wall and sat down, looking all the time at the closed door before him. He had not settled himself before the door opened, Sgt Cann pushed his head out the door.

'Shannon,' he called. 'Come on in here.'

'Do you want this next man?' Shannon asked uncertainly.

'Not yet,' the Sergeant said. 'Just you this time.'

Shannon jumped from his chair; he took three steps before he remembered his rifle. With an embarrassed look on his face, he turned back; he caught up the rifle and hurried to the door. At the door, he paused and tugged at his jacket to fit it more neatly under his riflebelt. Then he moved slowly around the half-open door and into the room.

The door to the office remained shut for almost twenty minutes, during that time Gillespie stood uneasily waiting, afraid to eavesdrop before a witness, afraid to talk to the other prisoner in a place so near to the center of the prison authority. After the heat of the office, he felt the coldness of the hall with an icy severity but the sweat he had started did not stop running in the cold hall. He felt sweat greasing his clothes under his armpits and along the

small of his back. Twice during the interval his left leg began to shake; he almost welcomed the shaking as a diversion from his thoughts. He jerked his body into attention as he heard the office door opening; he expected the Sergeant with a fearful summons but it was Shannon who stepped forth into the hall. He tried to comprehend the expression on Shannon's face but he could find nothing there but a blank pleasantness. Shannon closed the office door with excessive care as if he were locking a safe and then he turned to Gillespie. With the door closed, he began to grin a little.

'Come on,' he said, with a gesture to Gillespie. 'We're going back to the barracks.' His voice was loud as ever, but there was a hint of humor in his voice.

'Let's go,' he said. He watched Gillespie march past him in the hall.

Gillespie could not comprehend what had happened; expecting disaster, he could not turn his thoughts into quieter channels; he was almost disappointed. At the outside door, he looked back at Shannon but Shannon only smiled; he gave no reprimand. He was smiling without restraint as if he were infinitely pleased; his red Irish face was genial and warm.

'Keep going,' he said. 'We don't want to freeze to death out here.'

They walked quickly through the cold night to the barracks. Shannon opened the outside door quickly and with a happy gesture swung it open before Gillespie.

'Here we are,' he said.

At the screen door at the entrance to the big room, he set his key in the lock and paused. He turned to Gillespie, who was standing behind him. He looked at Gillespie and then he looked past him at the high stone hall and the heavy door. He shook his head twice, as if in pity for the stone and then he unlocked the door. As Gillespie stepped past him, he caught Gillespie's sleeve.

'Hold it,' he said. 'Don't go away.' He shut the door behind Gillespie, but he kept his eyes on Gillespie, holding him with his eyes.

'Would you like to know something?' he asked. His mouth was open in a wide grin; he held up his free hand to prevent an answer. 'You don't have to say anything,' he said. 'I'll tell you. It's the last time for me. The last time. He looked past Gillespie into the dark room. 'What do you think of that?'

'I don't know,' Gillespie said uncertainly. 'I'm not sure I know what you mean.'

Shannon's grin extended into laughter; the sound of it filled the room and echoed in the hall. 'You don't have to know,' Shannon said. 'You just won't see me ever again!'

Gillespie smiled nervously, but said nothing; he

was aware that some of the men in the room behind him were wakening he heard sounds in the room behind him. He watched Shannon as Shannon bent forward over the lock when the lock fell into place. Shannon stepped back.

You can say goodbye for me, Shannon said. I won't be here to do it. He turned swiftly and started for the door. He looked back once to say, So long, boy. I'll see you some other day. He slammed the outside door behind him. Gillespie, touching the screen door, felt the vibrations caused by the closing of the big door; his fingers took up the trembling and he smacked his hands together to check the vibration. He stepped suddenly away from the door, trying to forget Shannon's departure and everything that had happened that evening, but the whole time in a single image stayed in his mind: each detail vivid, each minute remembered. He found his blanket in its place on the shelf on the wall and he lay down there at the wall, feeling that he was unable to go farther; he welcomed the shock of the cold stone floor as he told himself that he was quivering from the cold and not from any outside terror.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Gillespie worked the next day as if he carried a devil twisted over his shoulder; at every sound he heard he turned as if to answer a question. He jumped when he heard a decisive or a quick step near him, and once he found himself sweating while he was standing in a cool corner. Twice during the day he spoke to Osgood, hoping for comfort or consolation, but he could not bring himself to speak of anything beside the continuing cold weather and the prospects of snow. Each time, Osgood answered him quietly, with no inflection of emotion, as if with each word he said he wished to end the conversation.

Failing with Osgood, Gillespie tried to exhaust his fear with his body in his work; he strained his arms to lift weights more quickly; he pumped his knees high when he ran in formation. But that night he found that he was again unable to sleep. He had hoped that he would be asleep before anyone was called out to the interrogations so that he could escape the anxiety of listening; but he was awake when Sgt. Cann came to the barracks at eight o'clock; the familiar voice startled him as it called out a name. Gillespie rolled quickly on his side to look through the darkness, but he could not see to the door. Listening, he was sure only that Sgt. Cann was alone.

Three times more during the night, Sgt. Cann called from the door, and the last name he called was Osgood. Gillespie sat up without thinking when he heard this name, as if to answer the call himself. The

men near him turned in irritation, cursing, and he lay back quickly; he could hear Osgood moving through the darkness, stumbling over the sleeping bodies. When the door closed behind Sgt. Cann and Osgood, Gillespie closed his eyes, and tried to concentrate his attention on sleeping. He rolled his head slowly to relax the tension around his eyes; he tried for a few minutes to close off his head from his body by rubbing the back of his neck, but his eyes would not stay closed. They opened to the darkness and the vague planes of the inner walls, but he could not fix the walls in one position; the walls wavered and moved away from him. With each moment that passed, he felt grateful that no one had come for him.

He did not hear Osgood returning until the screen door closed; then he heard again the familiar sounds of a man crossing the obstructed room and the louder sound of the outside door closing. He waited for Osgood or someone else to call his name, but he heard nothing. After a time, he felt his breath moving more easily, reprieved for a time, but prisoned on the cold floor, he finally slept.

The next day Gillespie was unable to keep away from Osgood; he could not check the questions that filled and frightened his mind. Once during the morning he tried to speak to Osgood, but the guard stopped him. At noon he found his opportunity; he caught Osgood in the barracks ten minutes before the noon formation as Osgood was leaving the latrine. Without hesitation, he walked up to Osgood and stopped him with a gesture of his hand.

What is it? Osgood asked. He stood with his weight balanced on both feet as if he could stand for an hour or run for an hour as he chose.

Gillespie stepped awkwardly away, pointing toward a corner of the room. Almost whispering, he said, I just want to talk to you for a minute. We could go over there.

Osgood stepped toward the wall and Gillespie followed, pleased that he did not have to take any further initiative. Osgood went all the way to the wall and then turned. He leaned slowly against the wall, adjusting his back to the plane of the wall. He grinned a little at his position, but Gillespie knew he would not laugh.

What can I do for you? Osgood said. I guess you have me cornered now.

I want to ask you about last night, Gillespie said. I want to know what happened last night when you went out with the Sergeant.

They asked me some questions, Osgood answered quietly. They asked about the picture on the wall, did you expect something else?

Gillespie shook his head. I don't know what to expect! He shook his head again, more slowly to indicate a part of his fear, and he allowed his voice

to quiver as he spoke I just don't know what to expect any more

You sound like it Osgood said From his relaxed position against the wall he looked at Gillespie his grin departed slowly by imperceptible degrees the curve of his mouth straightening into a narrow line in his face But I don't know what I can tell you I don't see how I can help you

You could tell me if Johnson was over there last night, Gillespie said Was he there?

Osgood nodded his head He was there he said I saw him twice while I was there

But why was he there?

'I don't know Osgood answered 'I guess he's working over there now

I don't understand it Gillespie said Johnson is the Colonel's orderly What's he doing working over there?

He may have lost his job Osgood said dully Did you ever think of that? Maybe he did something the Colonel didn't like and the Colonel fired him

Gillespie shivered he snapped his head toward Osgood looking hard a range of possibilities the ends out of sight like the limits of mountains, appeared suddenly before his comprehension He looked over his shoulder instinctively before he spoke, but no one was watching

Do you know something? he asked You sound as if you know what's happened

I don't know a thing Osgood said They don't tell me any more than they tell you

Then how do you know what the Colonel has done to Johnson?

Osgood with a shrug of his shoulders bounced his body away from the wall Is that all you've got to say? he asked angrily Have you done something you want to drop on me now? He turned to his right away from the corner and stepped away from Gillespie, but Gillespie stepped forward and blocked his way

No! he said You've got me all wrong Can't you see I'm scared? I just want to talk to you that's all I don't mean anything like you said

Osgood turned away from him as if he were ashamed to look into his face All right he said reluctantly But don't say it like you said it before

I'm sorry about that Gillespie said eagerly You know what's worrying me You understand my position he added

I know what's worrying you, Osgood said But I don't understand your position

Gillespie, feeling sure now that Osgood would stay for a time stepped away, considering what he had heard wondering how Osgood would accept further revelations he longed to speak openly as if to a confessor or to a friend He felt like opening his

humiliation to a sympathetic publicity but he could not be sure of sympathy from Osgood With sudden resolution he said I don't understand what's been happening nothing is going like I expected I thought you might know something about what's happening Do you see? That's what I wanted to talk about

We're talking about it now Osgood said I've told you I don't know anything more than you do

But you saw Johnson couldn't you tell whether he's here for good now? Or why he's here? My God all I want is a little help Gillespie turned away as if to hide his deep feeling As he turned he looked at Osgood and was satisfied to see in his face a baffled angry look of sympathy Osgood shook his head violently like a man shaking water out of his eyes after diving in deep water As Gillespie watched Osgood's face changed

I don't really know what you want Osgood said I think maybe you want me to tell you to forget all about it that it's nothing to do your work and forget about it Do you want something like that Gillespie?

I don't know what I want Gillespie said bitterly I guess I want news from the office How do I know?

Well I'll say one thing Osgood said I'll say you have something to worry about I don't know any more than you do but I can feel something in the air Christ! he added angrily You know all about that I don't need to tell you that

That's what I don't know! Gillespie said What makes you think there's trouble in the air?

Osgood's face stiffened anger merged with contempt He stepped toward Gillespie and caught the lapel of his cotton shirt All right he said You asked for it, now I'll tell you Dropping his hand from Gillespie's lapel but holding him close with the angry attraction of his eyes, he continued in a monotonous inflexible fury of speech In the first place you broke the picture of the Colonel's family and you know you can't get away with it In the second place you tried to put it off on Johnson and you know you can't get away with that And you've got me tangled in it all but you don't know what you can get away with in that You were afraid to own up when you broke the picture and you're more afraid now And you want me to tell you what to do! Osgood stopped suddenly as Gillespie listened there was a moment of powerful silence after Osgood stopped speaking before he heard again the talk of the other men in the room Would you like some more, Gillespie? Osgood said He forced the anger in his eyes like a blow against Gillespie, then he stepped back O you're a beauty Gillespie, he said You're a real beauty With his head high snorting his breath like a horse through flared nostrils Osgood pivoted to his right, he stepped out briskly For a

moment Gillespie was dazed then abstractedly as if against his will and better knowledge he caught Osgood again holding him with the strength of his fingers. He felt the fine hard tissue of muscle in Osgood's arm that resisted him instinctively as if it could endure no restraint.

Just one moment Gillespie said passing his voice softly over the irony. Maybe I know now what I should do. He tugged sharply at Osgood's sleeve as the arm itself escaped his fingers. Just let me tell you. He spoke quietly with a shabby authority threading the words together. It's not too late. Gillespie went on. I could go in right now and tell them all about it if I went in now and told them would that be the right thing to do?

Gillespie did not notice the surprise that quickened in Osgood's face. He felt the sleeve stop pulling against his fingers and that contented him. I could go right in and tell them. Gillespie said. I guess that would be all right wouldn't it? They couldn't do any more than they've done already. It's like you said it's just a picture. I believe you were right when you said that. Gillespie looked again at Osgood for the first time looking directly at him without fear or anger as if he were buying from a merchant some simple thing a hammer a box of nails something like a tool designed for use. In subduing his will to the will of another he felt no humiliation at all for a brief moment he felt a kind of rarefied and pleasant satisfaction. What do you think about that Osgood? he asked simply.

Osgood turned slowly with a blank uncomprehending cast in his face the anger and contempt had left his face leaving no traces showing not even the possibility of these fierce attitudes. Gillespie waiting became impatient.

What do you think? he said again.

That's a hard question too, Osgood said softly. That's as hard a question as the other.

But you started it all. Gillespie said with a quiet shrewdness. You ought to answer my questions now if never before.

But I don't know what to say. Osgood answered.

Gillespie began slowly to wake out of his withdrawn state of contemplation as he looked at Osgood the implications of what he had said began to come home to him. Now that he had secured approval with attention from Osgood he felt less sure of himself he began to hear more clearly the sounds of the other men in the room their talk the edgy fearing complaining voices loud denunciation in a deep voice behind him.

Say something then. Gillespie said. Say something.

It's up to you. Osgood said. I can't tell you what's right. I'm in it too.

But would it help? Do you think it would help?

It might help somebody else. I don't know what it would do for you.

Hearing this Gillespie felt a familiar chill crawl across his neck the skin on the back of his own person suffering the rack of an unidentifiable torture. He felt a deep swell of anger at Osgood for stimulating him to an impossible action.

You said plenty before! Gillespie said angrily. You had plenty to say a minute ago.

I know. Osgood said. Sometimes I talk too much.

Then answer an easy question. Should I do it? Should I tell them about it?

I don't know what to say. Osgood answered. His voice sounded surprised as if it had happened on something inexplicable and puzzling which the mind behind it could not comprehend. I don't think I can answer you any more. he went on. You're out ahead of me now.

Gillespie felt more and more like his familiar self his clear understanding of possibilities showed him the way. He began to understand how he had been led to his fearsome suggestion he began to see consequences again in an orderly and sensible arrangement he could again see himself suffering for sins he could not believe he had committed.

I see then. he said not bothering to mask his sarcasm. He noticed that he felt better a spirit of arrogance had returned to him after his momentary apostasy. Nodding his head to indicate his full comprehension and full of a feeling of honesty and personal honor he looked down on Osgood. I guess that's enough. he said. They'll call us out soon to lunch. He carefully placed his right hand in the pocket of his pants balling the fist and rubbing it slowly and methodically against his thigh. I think I'll go wash my hands. he said. He turned away from Osgood noticing with pleasure the look of new bafflement that had fallen across the earlier look of approval. I'll see you. Osgood he said carefully. Take it easy.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

That afternoon the special detail was split up into two groups. Gillespie went one way to clean latrines and Osgood went another but Gillespie did not forget Osgood. As Gillespie went about his work he remembered with conscious horror the suggestion he had made at noon he troubled himself trying to find his reasons for making the commitment. He feared that Osgood might be indiscreet he remembered all the stories he had heard of savage punishments in the prison he saw himself beaten and bloody and he pleased his imagination briefly by seeing himself defy his tormentors, but he could not

convince himself that the defiance would be worth the torment

He tried to calculate means of telling Osgood that he had changed his mind, and though he was afraid to speak again directly to Osgood, he was more afraid of abandoning Osgood to his delusion. His active imagination showed him Osgood in all innocence, giving him away and this image troubled him. He wondered how he could react to an innocent man's deed. He thought for a time of sending a note but he received this possibility as impractical. The note might be found. He knew he had no friends to trust with a message. His worry invaded his work holding his hand making him hesitant and twice during the afternoon, the guard called him roughly back to his duty.

He carried his anxiety with him back to the barracks. He saw no solutions. Before dinner he saw Osgood at the other end of the big room but he turned away quickly and began to talk to a man near him. He feared that Osgood would interrupt him before he was prepared for an encounter. He stayed away from Osgood successfully through the meal and for a time afterwards he sought a corner near the screen door and concealed himself behind three men who were talking in a group. They were standing and they made a barrier. He stood for a moment, deciding whether to lie down in the corner in concealment or to find another place nearer the center of the room but before he made up his mind he saw Osgood moving toward him from the rear of the room. Osgood caught his eye before he could look away. Gillespie looked for an avenue of escape, but the room was too crowded. He could move only in one direction along the wall toward Osgood.

Gillespie with his head down, watched Osgood approach. He saw Osgood's face set in repose for the night. Osgood stopped once along the wall to step over a man on the floor, and then he raised his hand in greeting.

Evening he said to Gillespie. He smiled pleasantly, and for a moment before he caught himself. Gillespie warmed to the smile, he felt his mouth shaping itself into an answering smile. Then he checked himself. He looked down at his shoes twisting his head from side to side.

How's it going? he heard Osgood say. The voice had a happy inflection he had never heard in it before. A sense of loss and desolation sickened him as he remembered his intention, he was amazed that friendship should be offered him. In a sudden vision he saw how he might retain the happiness in Osgood's voice and build with it a new realm of friendship but the vision did not last. His sense of consequences stifled it. Gillespie did not look at Osgood, he heard Osgood move nearer to him. Then decisively, Gillespie stepped from the wall with

two more steps he was past Osgood who turned with him in surprise. Gillespie continued on. He heard the confused sound of Osgood's shoes turning on the floor.

I never know how it's going, Gillespie said harshly over his shoulder. All I have is trouble and bad advice."

When Gillespie lay down in his blanket that night, he was almost comfortable. He was confident as he waited for the rollcall to the interrogations. He felt a mild sense of anticipation while he waited as if he had nothing to fear but he heard no summons.

After the lights went out the noise in the room fell into a declining murmur of voices and snores and heavy breathing and as this sound sank lower Gillespie's eyes closed of themselves. He wondered lazily whether the investigation had been abandoned, but he did not have the energy to pursue his thoughts to a conclusion. After a while he slept. He woke once when the man on his left turned against him turning his weight suddenly but after he pushed the man away he slept again as peacefully as before.

He did not wake again until midnight hearing a sudden loud stir of voices. He rolled in his blanket. The corner of the blanket which he had wrapped over his head fell away and bright light from the bulbs in the ceiling assaulted his sight. His eyes snapped open blinking into the light. Without thinking he sat up confused for a moment as though it were morning and then he heard his name called in a nervous loud voice. With his eyes shut against the light he could not see the speaker but the voice was familiar. The man next to him sitting up also in his blanket tapped him on the shoulder.

It's you, the man said. You're Gillespie, aren't you?

Without answering, Gillespie looked up at the screen door stood Johnson. A pistol in a leather holster hung from his belt. He stood bent forward and squinting into the brightly lighted room.

Gillespie he called again. Goddamn it, Gillespie!

Gillespie moved in his blanket to the side to no purpose, in a swivelling stare he saw all the men in the room sitting up or squatting a few standing uncertainly all blinking in the light looking for him. He felt the same panic he had felt when he had stood up in the messhall. Suddenly he remembered that his name had been called. He kicked the blanket away from his knees and started to rise.

Here he called in a choked and startled voice. Here I am. As he rose to his feet he thought foolishly that perhaps he should hold up his hand like a child in school who wishes to leave the room. His right hand switched at his side as he stood up.

Leaving the blanket in a heap on the floor he stumbled toward the door as he saw Johnson turn to him

Gillespie? the voice came sharply at him as if from a great distance with an irresistible force

I'm coming Gillespie said He stepped successfully over two men but he stumbled into another he felt his foot sink into a soft thigh he felt the eyes of all the men in the room move with him Now and then a face would rise to meet his gaze out of the multitude but in these faces he saw only the eyes wideawake staring calculating curious without pity

Johnson had the screen door open and he passed through the door and out into the corridor in the open space, in the wind he felt an impulse of freedom he took three steps past the screen door and stopped He listened without looking back to Johnson closing and locking the door

When the door was shut Johnson stepped stiffly by him to the outside door and swung it open This way he said His voice was low without inflection Let's go now

Gillespie walked through the door holding his head up in an instinctive gesture of innocence Outside he turned to watch Johnson turn off the lights in the room step through the door and set the big locks He heard a click and the light from a flash light swept out ahead of him paving a path of light along the ground before him

That way Johnson said gesturing with the light We're going to the office

Without speaking Gillespie moved down the electric path of light He kept his eyes on the ground but he could see only the light his mind was dazzled with light The bulbs in the ceiling of the big room fused with the light from the flashlight in a blinding illumination Walking heavily Gillespie could see only disaster in the appalling brightness

At the door of the office building Johnson set the light on the doorknob Open it will you? he said

Gillespie listened to each word playing each word over in his mind as he stretched out his right hand to the door he tried to detect anger or indignation in Johnson's voice but he could find no meaning in the words but the simple meaning of command

The hall was lighted with the one bulb which Gillespie remembered moving decisively Johnson passed him and walked to the door to Lt Camber's office Without hesitation, he knocked once and leaned to the door for his answer Gillespie could hear a voice through the door he saw Johnson nod his head and raise his hand to the doorknob he saw these movements as if they were movements in a procession to solemn music He saw even in the dim light the back of Johnson's hand circling the doorknob it was clean and white the veins

marked it timely He heard the lock fall open with a sound like an explosion in the silence that surrounded him

Johnson jerked his head toward the inside of the room Go on in he said Lieutenant Camber wants to talk to you

As Gillespie passed him he thought he saw the traces of a smile on the familiar face but he did not have time to look more closely before he was in the room the scene was set as he remembered it Lt Camber was sitting behind the desk Sgt Cann in a chair tilted back against the wall the door behind the Lieutenant's back was closed as it had been closed before

Gillespie marched to the desk and stopped with a snap in the position of attention As he remembered the last time he had been in the room he knew instantly that the room was colder than it had been the other time the stove in the corner was going but it did not heat the room so solidly as before He held his eyes on a point on the door behind the Lieutenant's back and waited for a question but the only sound he heard was the hall door closing behind him and Johnson's steps two and then silence around Feeling the silence Gillespie chanced a look at the Lieutenant without changing the position of his head, and he saw that the Lieutenant was watching him with a full steady stare Gillespie lifted his eyes again to the safety of the point in the door With three men watching him he felt the room fill up with his guilt, he felt his guilt as he stood before the desk unable to speak The Lieutenant's voice split open the heavy silence Gillespie the Lieutenant said Look at me

Gillespie slowly lowered his eyes the memory of the scene in the Colonel's house blurred his sight before his eyes touched the Lieutenant he wondered desperately how they had discovered his deed Pleas for mercy rose in him toward speech he almost called out before the Lieutenant spoke again

I suppose you're wondering why we called you out in the middle of the night Gillespie the Lieutenant said

Gillespie nodded his head, feeling the muscles in his neck move in obedience to another's will

There's a very simple reason, Gillespie, the Lieutenant went on Gillespie's head was still moving as the Lieutenant spoke and he had to make a special effort to stop it his head was moving as if it had a power and will of its own apart from his own will

It all goes back to the last time you were here the Lieutenant said He spoke slowly as if his words carried vast and imponderable meanings Do you remember that time Gillespie?

Yes sir Gillespie answered His eyes which before had blurred the room in front of him, opened



wider and focussed sharply on Lt Camber's face, he saw the face as a whole face and not as an organ of a fearful voice. A fierce and leaping hope set his heart to beating so that his chest shook with it and he heard the sound like another voice in the room. His fears withdrew as the Lieutenant went on.

You were called out so that you could answer questions Gillespie. The reason we called you and not someone else, lies in something you said to me the last time you were here rather in something you didn't say. Do you see what I'm getting at Gillespie?

I'm not sure sir Gillespie answered slowly 'I don't quite know what it is sir.

'The last time you were here you told me that you had forgotten the name of a man who had worked with you all of that day the name you forgot was Osgood. The Lieutenant stopped and looked at Gillespie who nodded his head to show that he remembered. All right then Gillespie, the Lieutenant went on. I won't ask you about that right now. I have two other questions. The Lieutenant picked up a pencil from the desk and balanced it on the back of his left hand. First did you draw the picture on the barracks wall?

No sir Gillespie answered automatically. No sir, I didn't do it.

Second did you see who did draw that picture?

No sir Gillespie said again shaking his head. I'm sorry sir.

Without looking down the Lieutenant tossed the pencil into the air and caught it in the palm of his hand as it came down.

Very good then the Lieutenant said briskly. I didn't expect anything more at this time. I expect more later however. He set the pencil down again on the desk and stood up. He turned his head toward Sgt Cann who had risen with him. Coffee Sergeant? he asked.

I could use some sir the Sergeant said 'I told the cooks to keep some for us.

That's fine Sergeant the Lieutenant said. He snapped his head around with a conscious precision and faced Johnson. We'll leave this man Gillespie to your ministrations for a while now, he said. I think you understand what we're interested in knowing.

I do sir Johnson answered. When will you be back sir?

We won't be long Johnson. I don't intend to sleep again until this matter is resolved. The Lieutenant stepped around the desk past Johnson to the door, at the door he paused and turned around.

One more thing Johnson, he said. You must remember that prisoners in this company are not treated as you have been accustomed to treating Colonel Vopel. You're a guard now Johnson. You

have Shannon's place. Laughing quietly to himself, the Lieutenant turned and went out the door. Sgt Cann followed him out and closed the door behind him.

Gillespie stood in his stiff position half turned away from the desk. He knew that he had been reprieved again but he was confused by the Lieutenant's actions, and he was disturbed by the maliciousness in the Lieutenant's instructions to Johnson. He stood steady hoping that Johnson would see the compliment in his respectful stance. Behind him, he heard Johnson moving. He heard the scrape of a chair being moved.

You can turn around this way, Johnson said.

Gillespie turned, Johnson was sitting in the chair that Sgt Cann had left. All four legs of the chair were on the floor and Johnson sat bolt upright in the chair with his hands on his knees looking up at Gillespie with a bright intensity for thirty seconds. He looked without speaking. Then slowly as if he were quoting from memory he said. I guess you make trouble wherever you go don't you Gillespie? He held up his hand to prevent an answer. You don't have to answer that. You'll have plenty of answers to make later. Right now I have orders to ask you about that drawing on the barracks wall.

Gillespie commanded to be silent stood firmly for a moment. He felt that it was ridiculous for Johnson to question him. He looked closely at Johnson, hoping to find some trace of the politeness he had enjoyed on other occasions. He saw only bitterness and a fear that could not be concealed behind the bitterness. In the hope that gathered around his desperation Gillespie nodded his head once and spoke. I understand about the drawing on the wall he said boldly. But I don't know why you said that about my making trouble. He stopped as if he had spoken only because he had to speak in the interests of truth and honor.

Johnson jumped indignantly to his feet. Don't say that! he said. I don't have to listen to you! His body quivered on the chair. You know what I mean about trouble, you know just what I mean.

Gillespie's memory flashed up for him the scene in the Colonel's room after the picture had fallen to the floor and the tight confident feeling he had while he was concealing the fragments. He had the same feeling as he watched Johnson. He felt that he could control the situation. He felt the womanish irritation in Johnson's voice as a weakness he could use. He shook his head slowly from side to side allowing his eyes to hang in a loose bewilderment in his face.

I don't he said. I don't know what you're talking about. Watching Johnson he saw Johnson open his mouth as if to speak and then close it again uncertainly. I don't know what you want,

Gillespie said breaking his words as if upon a great emotion I'm just a guy in trouble that's all Can I help you, Johnson? I'd like to help you if I can

Johnson's face grew red he caught his upper lip between his teeth Gillespie watching felt confidence rise in him with his bold words he felt that he had won his contest He waited for Johnson to speak fresh denials were forming already in his mind

I don't see how you can say that Johnson said at last With a sudden resolution he stepped toward Gillespie You broke the Colonel's picture! he cried You broke it while you were working in his room You did didn't you?

Thinking quickly, and with a clarity which he recognized Gillespie decided against answering with his head bent a little forward he raised his eyebrows and blinked his eyes knowing from past experience the pitiable appearance his face would carry He shook his head slowly, with an infinite pity pleading in his eyes for justice

Answer me! Johnson shouted As the sound of his words came back to him Johnson recoiled from Gillespie as if in fear of his own severity Well answer he said again

But I don't know anything about that picture Gillespie said The innocence in his voice was so palpable that he almost laughed aloud at his own cleverness I really don't he added in a clear level voice You say it's been broken?

Yes it's been broken and it was you or the man with you that broke it You can't lie to me about that

I'm not lying Gillespie said Can't you see I'm not lying?

Johnson advanced toward him with anger and unwilling belief sweeping alternately across his face Then it was the other one did it? he asked eagerly Was it the other one? Is that what you're saying?

I didn't say that Gillespie answered with dignity I said I didn't know anything at all about that picture

You're lying Johnson said You must be lying then He looked at Gillespie's face searched it and then turned quickly away he went to the chair and set one hand on the chairback

I'm not lying Gillespie said to him I'd help you if I could you know that You always treated me right

Johnson lifted his hand from the chair the corners of his mouth were trembling That's right he said I always treated all you men as if you weren't prisoners at all, I always gave you the breaks

And I remember it Gillespie said You were always fair to me Johnson Gillespie feeling that he had won his argument separated his heels a little to ease his legs, he looked once around the room

feeling it as a comfortable small room not any longer as a hall of justice and punishment

But I can't believe you Johnson said slowly not looking at Gillespie The picture was in the room when the Colonel left in the morning and it was there when I made up the bed That night he found part of it stuffed away in a drawer in the dresser I know I didn't break it and you two were the only ones beside myself who were in the room, I know all that Nothing can change that

That's too bad Gillespie said compassionately That's a terrible thing

You don't know how bad it is Johnson said sadly With his last word he stopped as he realized that he no longer commanded the conversation He hesitated looking down at his feet while he made up his mind then he said Can you say it again? That you didn't do it?

I didn't do it, Gillespie said I could say it all night

Then it was the other one! Johnson said Did you see him do it Gillespie?

I've said already that I didn't see anything I'm sorry I just don't know anything about it

I know I know Johnson said I know you can't say anything now this other man is probably a friend But he must have done it If you didn't do it he was the only one who could have done it

Gillespie saw Johnson's face begin to set around a new look of resolution the mouth stopped twitching the clean-shaven cheeks showed white again over the cheekbones Johnson stood facing Gillespie but Gillespie was sure that Johnson did not see him

That must be it Johnson said mumbling That son of a bitch! Johnson looked up at Gillespie That son of a bitch! Johnson said clearly I'll get him

But are you sure it couldn't have been someone else? Gillespie asked Johnson's curses sounded obscene to him as they came from the pale mild face Gillespie began to see the consequences of his success the image of Osgood's face grim and sharp and angry at the eyes, appeared suddenly in his mind Gillespie shuddered

You're sure nobody else could have gotten in? Were you there all day?

It doesn't make any difference Johnson said flatly I wasn't there all day but I know what happened Johnson's gaze shifted to Gillespie's feet and Gillespie uneasily brought his heels together again Johnson turned suddenly to the chair and sat down But this isn't what we're here for he said

I'm supposed to be asking you questions and about something else than this I'm to find out about a drawing on a barracks wall Do you know anything about that drawing Gillespie?

I saw it the morning after it was made Gillespie answered That's the only time I saw it It's like I

told the Lieutenant, I don't know anything about it."

I heard what you said to the Lieutenant, Johnson said. Christ! What does he want me to do? He leaned forward in his chair. I don't know anything about this work. He lifted both hands, palms up, in an appeal to Gillespie.

Why are you over here then? Gillespie asked.

Why did they send you over here if you don't know the work?

I've told you why, Johnson said angrily. The Colonel sent me over here and he called Shannon out to take my place. And now I take Shannon's place here. Johnson laughed, showing his bitterness like a forbidden flag. You see what it gets me, treating you men decently.

But why would the Colonel do that? Gillespie asked innocently. You didn't break the picture.

That's what I told him, Johnson said. He dropped his hands into his lap; he looked down at the delicate veins in his hands.

Didn't he believe you?

How do I know? He didn't say. Do you know what he said, Gillespie? He said it was my responsibility since I was in charge of the detail; he said he was sorry to lose me, but he would do me the favor of sending me to this company to work as a guard.

I don't understand that, Gillespie said. It doesn't look like a favor to me.

It's a favor all right, Johnson said. Working here I can even the score; do you see that? The Colonel didn't say that though. He only said he'd check with me later to see how I was making out; that's all he said. He isn't through with me yet, Gillespie; that's what it means.

It's not fair, Gillespie said indignantly. He nodded his head to indicate his sympathy; he allowed his face to supplement his words with a look of understanding.

And now I'm up all night out in the cold standing post, Johnson said quietly. Tonight I'm lucky I get to stay inside. That's what I get for being decent; that's my reward.

Gillespie watched him; the face was still set. Gillespie began to sense a change in Johnson that put Johnson beyond his reach; he sensed that he would not again be able to say anything to Johnson. His fears returned, replacing his confidence, but leaving an empty place that sucked his worries inward; his thoughts returned to Osgood. He tried to banish Osgood from his mind, but the persistent image of the angry face stayed with him.

But you can forget it, Johnson said suddenly. I want you to forget it, Gillespie. Do you understand that?

I won't say a word, Gillespie answered. I understand your problem.

"If anyone asks you I talked about the Lieuten-

ant's picture all the time. You forget everything else I said, Gillespie; you can do that for me."

I'll forget it like it had never been, Gillespie said. You'll see.

But don't think I'll forget, Johnson said. I'm not forgetting anything. He nodded his head so that Gillespie felt he had been excluded from the gesture; he thought it was as if Johnson were agreeing with himself. I'm learning, Johnson said. Give me time and I'll know all I need to know.

## CHAPTER NINE

It was a full hour before Lt. Camber and Sgt. Cann returned to the office. During that time, Johnson questioned Gillespie about the drawing on the wall; his questions covered the day before the drawing was found, the evening, the night, and the next morning. Without any great concern for his problem and with no animosity toward Gillespie, he phrased his questions carefully and asked them in a dull, quiet voice, but he held Gillespie in the position of attention. He stopped speaking quickly when he heard the step of Lt. Camber in the hall. He stood up from his chair and waited in front of the door; he stood at attention while the Lieutenant walked into the room. The Lieutenant went to his desk and sat down.

Stand at ease, Johnson, he said. He picked up his pencil again and looked at Sgt. Cann, who had found his chair again. Are we ready to start, Sergeant? he asked.

I'm ready, Sgt. Cann answered. I'm prepared for anything. He turned his head and looked steadily at Gillespie's face; he settled his features into an expression of easy patience.

All right then, the Lieutenant said. Well proceed. First, Johnson, did you learn anything, Johnson?

No, sir, Johnson answered. Apparently this man doesn't know anything about the drawing at any rate; he won't talk about it.

I see, the Lieutenant answered. He turned from Johnson to Gillespie. You're exhausting my patience, Gillespie, he said. You're being very difficult. I feel that I've already gone very far in leniency toward you. I feel that you don't appreciate my consideration. The Lieutenant looked down at his pencil, turning it in his hands so that the engraved trademark caught the light. He shook his head twice and looked up again at Gillespie. Perhaps I should remind you of a few facts which you may have forgotten. I might stimulate your imagination, if not your memory. First of all, you slept at the door, the night the drawing was made. Secondly, you are known to have been awake during the night. Thirdly, at your first interrogation you lied to me, and it has

been my experience that one lie commonly conceals another lie. Finally we know you to be a trouble maker. You have been punished publicly for breaking a prison rule; you have been sent on a punitive detail on the order of Colonel Vopel himself for having improperly performed your duties while cleaning his quarters. Can you object to my facts, Gillespie?

Gillespie felt his face redden; he started a complete denial, but his intention dissolved in his better judgment and in his fear of the Lieutenant.

"I—no, sir," he said. "I guess your facts are all right."

"But you object to my conclusions. That's not at all complimentary, Gillespie. I rather pride myself on my powers of judgment."

"That's not what I meant, sir."

"You needn't explain it, Gillespie," the Lieutenant answered. "Your meaning is clear enough." Johnson, the Lieutenant said sharply, "just what was your procedure with this man?"

"Why I asked questions, sir," Johnson answered.

"Do you think you covered the ground thoroughly?" Johnson?

"I think so, sir."

"But you learned nothing. Perhaps you employed the wrong technique. Is that possible?" Johnson?

"Yes, sir. I suppose it's possible."

"Then perhaps you should try something else," Johnson said. "I suggest you go into the next room and try something else."

"Yes, sir," Johnson answered.

"Back here," the Lieutenant said, gesturing over his shoulder at the door behind him. "You can close the door behind you if you wish."

Johnson nodded his head and stepped toward the door. "Come on," he said to Gillespie. Johnson opened the door and went into the room beyond. When Gillespie had passed the door, Johnson closed it, setting the catches softly into place. Then he turned to face Gillespie; a look of determination replaced the anxious humiliation that had showed in his face. He shook his head slowly, as if to indicate his reluctance.

"Gillespie," he said. "You could save me a lot of trouble if you told me now. Will you tell me something now?"

"I can't tell you anything," Gillespie answered. "I've told you the truth about everything."

Johnson looked down, nodding his head. "That may be," he said. He stepped closer to Gillespie and whispered, "But what can I do? You heard what the Lieutenant said."

Gillespie, afraid to speak, nodded his head. Though the door was closed, he could feel Lt. Camber's presence in the next room, as if in answer

to his thought, he heard a loud knocking on the door.

"Johnson!" the Lieutenant's voice said. "Speak loud enough so I can hear you!"

Johnson automatically stood straighter. "Yes, sir!" he called. He turned to Gillespie. "Go over to the wall!" he said. He pointed to his left. "Over there."

Gillespie followed the outstretched hand. He stopped three feet from the wall and looked back. A specific and localized fear began to possess him. Johnson no longer resembled a dupe or a friend.

"Put your feet to the wall," Johnson said. "But keep the heels together. Now bend down. He stepped up beside Gillespie and touched a point on the wall three feet above the floor. "Touch your nose to the wall, right there."

Gillespie, following instructions, bent down. He felt naked. The muscles in his back grew taut. He found that he could not touch the wall without turning his head, and when he turned his head, his neck was bent so that he felt an immediate stitch of pain.

"That's right," Johnson said. "Now keep your legs straight." Johnson stepped back out of Gillespie's sight. Gillespie could hear Johnson's quick, harsh breathing. Now then, Johnson said in a loud voice, "Did you make the drawing on the wall?"

Gillespie, hearing the strained loudness in Johnson's voice, guessed that Johnson was talking for the Lieutenant in the next room. "I didn't do it," he said.

"Did you see who did make that drawing?"

"I didn't see anything," Gillespie answered. His left leg was beginning to quiver; the knee ached as it had ached when he had been punished in the mess hall; the stories he had heard of prison punishments changed in his mind to sharp images. He closed his eyes against a vision of his own face, but the image remained; the eyes were rolling wild. He waited for Johnson's next question.

"Then stand for a while," Johnson said.

The voice sounded incredibly controlled. Gillespie could not recognize its intonation. The voice sounded remote and distant. Gillespie waited for a blow, a sense of vast injustice wracked him. He became conscious of the cold flatness of the wood, his nose touched.

Johnson did not speak again for five minutes. When he spoke, his voice was as loud as before.

"You can stand up now," he said.

Gillespie arched his back quickly, but stopped his movement as a sharp and licking pain ran the length of his left leg. He turned away from the wall, bracing himself with his right hand against the wall. He straightened slowly; his body did not respond as he expected it to respond, and he was forced to prop every motion against the wall. He was astonished at his own weakness.

Did you make the drawing on the wall? Johnson asked

Gillespie was amazed at the question he felt it as an indignity after his feat of physical endurance 'No!' he said His breath rushed from him as he spoke and he gasped quickly to fill his lungs

Did you see who did make that drawing?

Gillespie shook his head 'No!' he said in a long respiratory cry I didn't see anything He looked at Johnson Johnson looked down at him twisting his mouth in a gesture of pity he shook his head and shrugged his shoulders Without making a noise and without changing his expression he mouthed the words I have to do it He pointed at the door Then in the familiar loud voice he said Take the position again, just like you were before As Gillespie turned again to the wall he noticed a new look on Johnson's face it was compounded equally of curiosity and a partially concealed satisfaction As Gillespie bent to the wall his body went through the same cycle of pain as when he had risen when his nose touched the wall he closed his eyes Then for ten minutes he wracked his body on the impossible angle He became dizzy Only his fear of more painful punishments held him after twelve minutes he stopped trying to control his dizziness He felt vast reeling motions in his head a red glow swirled in his darkness and he felt himself swaying at a great distance he heard steps moving toward him as he fell He tumbled stiffly backward to the floor his buttocks hit the floor and then his body opened out of its angle the back of his head bounced on the floor, twice and then settled to the wood With the blow his eyes opened the vertigo was gone but a harsh pain invaded his body from head to foot as he shivered in a fierce relaxation He closed his eyes and then opened them again when he felt someone touch him Johnson was bending over him touching his shoulder

Are you hurt? Johnson asked I tried to catch you but you were too quick for me

Gillespie sat up and touched the back of his head He was confused, for a moment, he did not remember where he was He looked up at Johnson and saw only a mild curiosity drawn across the white face

O I'm all right Gillespie said Suddenly embarrassed he started to get up When he reached his feet he turned around and looked at the door there were two knocks on the door and then Lt Camber walked in The Lieutenant stood for a moment looking and then grinned a little

What happened Johnson? he asked What caused all the noise?

'This man fell Johnson said diffidently I had him lined up against the wall and he fell backward and hit his head

The Lieutenant nodded without speaking He glanced at Gillespie, taking in the bewilderment and the embarrassment and then he looked at Johnson he extended the nodding of his head to his hips bowing a little he smiled his approbation

Well, he said I'm surprised Johnson perhaps you're learning your duties now

I'm learning sir Johnson said I think I see my duty sir

That's very good Johnson Do we know anything more now?

Nothing new sir It's very difficult

'Yes the Lieutenant said I understand the difficulty He lifted his right hand above his shoulder to look at his watch Almost two o'clock he said I think it's time to try something else I think perhaps it would be a good thing now to bring in the other man his name is Osgood Well bring these two together and see what happens You know where to find Osgood I presume

Yes sir I'll be able to find him

We'll wait for you Meanwhile the Lieutenant turned to Gillespie I'll try my luck with this one Come on he said to Gillespie Back to the office The Lieutenant turned swiftly with the precision of good health and confidence and stepped through the door With no feeling other than embarrassment and fragmentary pain, Gillespie followed He was dazed he could not comprehend Johnson's actions he expected sympathy and a hand on the shoulder to guide him He wavered in his stride as he went through the door, and he had to steer himself by hand away from the door frame With a blind remembrance of the established convention he moved to his position in front of the Lieutenant's desk As he turned to face the desk he saw Johnson go out into the hall sudden realization pierced the dullness of his exhaustion He thought of Osgood, angry all ways, soon to be wakened out of his sound sleep He turned his head wildly away from the door as if by the gesture to escape his entrapment As he looked down at the Lieutenant a vast confusion muffled his sharpness he felt as if a nightmare had invaded all his intelligence dissipating his power of planning with his power of standing erect He blinked his eyes twice to bring the Lieutenant's face into focus

How are you feeling Gillespie? the Lieutenant asked

I'm dizzy Gillespie said suddenly He shifted his feet and shook his head I can't see too well

It's time enough Sgt Cann said from behind him Maybe you'll shake a little now

Before Gillespie could turn to look at the Sergeant the Lieutenant spoke again Perhaps you understand now that we're serious Gillespie Of course, we do regret your dizziness, though we don't understand

its cause Can you tell us about the picture on the wall now?

But I don't know anything Gillespie said obstinately He was astonished at the shakiness in his voice feeling that the shakiness constituted an admission he spoke again I don't know anything at all How can I talk if I don't know anything?

You're very stubborn the Lieutenant said I really can't understand it Perhaps I should put the matter another way we want you to know something we want the knowledge to appear It is our hope that before the night is over you will know something and further that knowing you will be willing to communicate your knowledge I suppose you don't understand that Gillespie?

Gillespie shook his head feeling his confusion grow within him it twisted his thoughts into an impossible puzzle Nothing came straight for him he heard a voice asking questions but the meaning in the words escaped him only the meaning of entrapment was clear in his mind He pictured Osgood walking sullenly through the darkness following the electric path of light which he himself had followed earlier He did not answer the Lieutenant's question nodding his head, he tried to picture his own confusion

I didn't think you would understand the Lieutenant went on Perhaps you'll understand better when your friend Osgood arrives We'll just wait comfortably until he gets here

It was five minutes before Johnson returned with Osgood Gillespie thinking back over what the Lieutenant had said tried to find the meanings which had slipped by him but his thoughts were interrupted as soon as they started by the image of Osgood's face Gillespie almost forgot the Lieutenant as he thought of Osgood he pictured the wrath of Osgood shaking the room shattering his plans and all his strategies He felt that nothing was going well he felt his plans breaking up under the impact of their own success He shuddered when he thought of Johnson and Osgood alone in the room behind the office He looked down at the Lieutenant, and he was amazed that the Lieutenant could be so calm while such disasters were shaping themselves toward their climax in the night He jumped when he heard steps in the hall, and he did not even try to conceal his emotion although he felt the Lieutenant's eyes on him He wanted desperately to look around when he heard the hall door open but he restrained himself

In there, he heard Johnson say Go right in the door

Gillespie could recognize only a part of Johnson's voice anger had mastered the soft inflection that had been there before Gillespie recognized only the high waspishness of the voice itself

You can stand up next to Gillespie Johnson said 'The Lieutenant wants to talk to you both

The Lieutenant looked past Gillespie at Osgood moving across the room when Osgood stood beside Gillespie he spoke I do indeed want to talk to you both he said So that you will understand what I'm getting at I'll go over it briefly for you Osgood Gillespie has heard it already and therefore I'll be brief and it is simple You see Osgood we think that you and Gillespie know something about the drawing the obscene drawing which appeared on the barracks wall last week We caught Gillespie in a lie which involved you and that was our tip We have brought you two over here in order to secure admissions of what we know and that's the problem Now what do you know Osgood?

Nothing Osgood answered sharply I don't even know what kind of lie Gillespie has told you He looked straight ahead of him fixing the Lieutenant with his steady stare

The Lieutenant looked up quickly in surprise then he turned to Sgt Cann You were right Sergeant he said I think he'll be difficult too

I know him all right Sgt Cann said He's a troublemaker who always has an answer

Yes the Lieutenant said You told me about that It happened more than once as I recall do you remember Osgood?

Osgood looked down at the Lieutenant pausing before he answered Gillespie seeing the Lieutenant's eyes on Osgood turned his head a little to his left to look at Osgood the face had the familiar stiffness but a stiffness afflicted now with a dark bitterness Gillespie turned away as Osgood answered

I think I remember Osgood said It doesn't trouble me

The Lieutenant suddenly angry stood up behind the desk Shut up! he said Answer the question don't do anything more! Sergeant! the Lieutenant called I want you to witness this The Lieutenant looked across the room at Sgt Cann who had risen from his chair It's something we'll want to remember Sergeant the Lieutenant added He sat back in his chair picking up the pencil again as he settled himself

Now then, Osgood the Lieutenant continued in a calmer voice I'll ask the question again Do you know anything about that drawing?

No, sir Osgood answered quietly I've told you once I'm tired of pictures now I don't want to know anything about any of them

Gillespie jumped in place, dancing with the fear that took possession of him he heard Johnson move his feet behind him and he thought he heard Johnson draw breath quickly but the Lieutenant's voice interrupted the sound

I can see that the Lieutenant said But again we don't want any comments Is that all you've got to say?

I can't say anything more sir Osgood answered Very well then the Lieutenant said crisply I've given you your chance now we'll try something else Johnson!

Yes sir Johnson said stepping forward to the side of the desk

Johnson, the Lieutenant said I want you to place this man Osgood for us Place him in this room, I want to watch what happens You can use this wall on my right The Lieutenant gestured with the pencil

Yes sir Johnson answered He touched his right hand to the holster that hung at his belt and juggled it across his hip Over there he said to Osgood You heard the Lieutenant He followed Osgood to the wall Now stand at attention against the wall put your toes against the wall that's right Johnson took a deep breath he stood leaning forward his right hand moved to the top of the holster Now bend down Johnson stepped forward and touched the wall Now touch your nose to this point on the wall and hold it there and keep your knees stiff Johnson watched Osgood move as he had directed and then he turned to face the Lieutenant 'Is that all right sir?

That's quite satisfactory Johnson Shannon himself could not have done it better The Lieutenant inspected Osgood then showing his power in his slow gesture he turned to Gillespie You'll watch Gillespie he said You will observe that we have not touched this man you remember that no one touched you except to help you to your feet

Gillespie turned his head the awkward bowed stance of Osgood's twisted body caused a sudden pain in his own left shoulder as he remembered his own position He was astonished to see Osgood obey the commands he was shocked at the ugly controlled fury that could bend Osgood's proud body

Turn all the way around Gillespie, the Lieutenant said

Gillespie shuffled his feet and turned, each instant he expected to see Osgood leap from the wall in wild rebellion, but Osgood did not move His face was turned to the wall held close so that Gillespie could see only the back of the head For ten minutes Osgood did not move nor give any sign of fatigue or tension With each passing minute Gillespie expected action a fall or a cry of pain, but after ten minutes he watched Osgood as if Osgood were an athlete displaying his virtuosity Gillespie became fascinated by the spectacle his curiosity submerged his anxiety With a remote calculation he tried to compute time until Osgood would fall he did not prepare himself to jump to Osgood's assistance

Osgood did not show weakness until almost fifteen minutes after he had been braced into his position then his left leg began to shake Gillespie watched the quivering leg as if it were the head of a boxer under blows he was not surprised when the quivering stopped Osgood stood firm for twenty minutes altogether Then, with no warning while Gillespie was looking away while the Lieutenant was examining papers on his desk and while Johnson had turned away to shrug his shoulders at Sgt Cann Osgood fell backwards He made no sound as he fell He straightened out as he fell and his head hit the floor first the floor shook with the impact Gillespie looked down paralyzed for a moment no one moved Then Johnson turned to look down the Lieutenant shook his head slightly

He's all right the Lieutenant said 'He'll get up by himself

Gillespie feeling drained of all power stood rigidly He watched Osgood's body shake in a sudden spasm he watched Osgood slowly raise his head Osgood set his right hand behind him and braced himself into a sitting position shaking his head with his eyes closed

'You can get up now Sgt Cann said suddenly His voice was very loud in the quiet room

That's right Johnson said eagerly Get up now! He was looking down at Osgood staring eyes wide open Get up! he said again Gillespie turned to look at him feeling a horror of what he might see Johnson's back was toward him but Johnson was trembling Beyond Johnson Gillespie could see Osgood slowly rising to his feet he stood up slowly, swaying drunkenly but his eyes were open moving purposefully in the exhausted face

All right Osgood said I'm up now What do you want now?

We want you to stand at ease, Osgood the Lieutenant said smoothly I'll ask you two questions

'I still don't know anything Osgood said And I'm still strong

'That may be the Lieutenant continued He held Osgood's attention with his smile But you should listen to my questions before you answer The Lieutenant paused as if out of politeness waiting for Osgood to speak, but Osgood only looked fixing his eyes on the Lieutenant's smile I'll go on then the Lieutenant said First question did this man Gillespie put that drawing on the wall? You would do well to tell the truth now, Osgood the truth will come out eventually you know

I didn't see anything Osgood answered But I can't speak for anyone else why don't you ask Gillespie?

You're sure Osgood?

I didn't see anything



Second question did you make that drawing?  
No

The Lieutenant opened his mouth to speak but before he could get the words out Sgt Cann stepped in front of him past the desk

You see Lieutenant? he said Why waste time with him? Let's let Johnson work him over for a while

One moment Sergeant the Lieutenant said I think you're right but before we do anything further I have one more thing to say to this man He looked up at Osgood I'm giving you this chance he said If Gillespie made the drawing as we think he might have done you will gain nothing by concealing your knowledge Gillespie's no great friend of yours anyway

I don't know anything Osgood said flatly And I don't need you to tell me that Gillespie is no friend of mine What do you want now?

Nothing Osgood the Lieutenant said Nothing right now I'll talk to you again later Johnson!

Here I am sir

You will take this man Osgood into the next room I don't want to see him again until he is more tractable is that clear?

I understand sir I think I can manage it

You seem quite sure of yourself Johnson Are you sure you understand my requirements?

I know what to do Johnson answered I've learned a lot tonight sir

Then you may proceed the Lieutenant said Well be right here The Lieutenant sat back in his chair to watch as Johnson directed Osgood through the door into the back room Gillespie feeling that no one was watching him looked toward the door as Osgood went through he saw a muscle in Osgood's cheek twitching the motion moved from the jaw to the ear in a comprehensive signal As the door closed a cry formed on Gillespie's lips for an instant he thought of retracting all his actions with one sentence but the door closed before he could summon his voice Gillespie looked down at the Lieutenant but he could say nothing to him the Lieutenant was playing with the pencil grinning as he inspected the trademark Through the closed door, Gillespie could hear Johnson's voice

Right over there, the voice said Against that wall

With an expression of mild amusement the Lieutenant looked past Gillespie at Sgt Cann

I like to listen he said It's possible to learn a great deal by listening

It sounds all right the Sergeant said 'It sounds as if Johnson knows what he's doing

I think so the Lieutenant said Johnson is learning very rapidly I think he understands his

duties now The Lieutenant looked up at Gillespie Do you agree with me Gillespie?

I don't know sir Gillespie said in a low voice I'm not qualified

Indeed you're not the Lieutenant answered He laughed a little and then as the idea caught him he laughed harder Indeed you're not! My! the Lieutenant gasped I believe you've caught the essence of the matter The Lieutenant turned his head as Johnson's voice came again through the closed door

Don't move the voice said Stand steady!

He seems to be warming to his work the Lieutenant said Does it sound so to you Sergeant?

Something's happening the Sergeant said Maybe we'll get some results now

The Lieutenant leaned backwards in his chair listening but for a time there were no more sounds from the room For almost three minutes there were no sounds but the sounds of chairs and breathing Then Johnson's voice came through the door the waspishness was gone in a wild urgency

Stand steady! Stand steady!

Gillespie standing tensely heard the sound of feet moving rapidly scuffling on the floor of the next room The Lieutenant calm as he heard the voice jumped to his feet when he heard the scuffle He turned quickly reaching for the pistol he carried at his belt he opened the door Gillespie stepped to his left to look past the Lieutenant but before he reached a position where he could see he heard Johnson's voice choking a little but very loud

It's all right sir Everything's under control

Through the open door Gillespie could see Johnson legs spread, standing over Osgood Osgood was on his knees in front of Johnson holding himself up with his right hand rubbing his forehead with his left hand In the bright light Gillespie could see Osgood's lower lip caught up between the opposing rows of teeth a line of blood was forming at the corner of Osgood's mouth running from the slashed lip

What happened? the Lieutenant asked He stepped into the room, but with his right hand he gestured to Sgt Cann to stay back

He wouldn't stand Johnson said The son of a bitch wouldn't stand

And you took corrective measures? the Lieutenant asked

I took care of this one Johnson said He lifted his right hand showing the pistol held firmly by the barrel

I see the Lieutenant said Do you think you can continue?

I'll take care of this one Johnson answered I know how to take care of him now

You're sure? the Lieutenant asked

I'm sure, sir I know what's to be done sir

All right Johnson the Lieutenant said See

that you don't break anything. He stepped back closing the door behind him. 'Get back!' he said to Gillespie. 'Stand away from the desk.'

Gillespie unbelieving watched the Lieutenant sit down at the desk. 'You're not going to leave him in there?' he said. 'After that?'

'Stand at attention, Gillespie!' the Lieutenant shouted. 'And keep your mouth shut!' Sgt. Cann! If this man speaks again, stop him!'

'Yes, sir!' the Sergeant said. He stepped up behind Gillespie, moving with quick even steps. Gillespie could feel the Sergeant moving toward him. Sensing a blow, he ducked his head forward and turned, but the Sergeant caught him by the shoulder and spun him around. As Gillespie turned, the Sergeant hammered the heel of his right hand down upon Gillespie's neck, just above the shoulder. Gillespie fell forward across the desk.

'There!' the Sergeant said. 'That'll shut him up!'

Through his daze, Gillespie felt the Sergeant catch his collar, he felt a jerk and then he spilled backward off the desk.

'Wake up!' the Sergeant said. 'I didn't hit you hard.'

Gillespie sagged against the restraining arm, but he wakened with the strokes of the hand against his face. He struggled slowly to his feet. He stood finally alone and the Sergeant stepped back.

'Is that all right, Lieutenant?' the Sergeant said.

'That will be enough,' the Lieutenant said. 'Don't hit him again.'

'I wanted to loosen him,' the Sergeant said. 'That's all I wanted to do.'

'You were successful enough,' the Lieutenant said. 'Now leave him alone.'

Gillespie, hearing the Lieutenant's voice, looked up. The room spun before him, but as he watched, his vision stabilized. The Lieutenant's face came into focus. He noticed that the Lieutenant's eyes were blue. Before he could straighten the impression, he heard another series of sounds from the next room: feet scuffling, a cry, a blow. The sounds seemed to return as echoes, beating against Gillespie's ears, but he could not move. His eyes lost their focus again. He saw the Lieutenant move, but he could not see the whole motion. He saw a motion fused with its reeling background. He leaned forward and rested his body against the desk. Through his confusion, he saw the Sergeant move past him, following the Lieutenant through the door. He heard the Lieutenant's voice shouting, bloated and vast with rage.

'Drop it!' he heard the Lieutenant call. 'Drop it, goddammit! Drop it now!'

Gillespie looked up across the desk to the door, but the Sergeant stood on the sill, blocking the view, realizing only disaster at last, Gillespie could

see nothing but the Sergeant's back. Painfully counting each motion as an advance through great distance, Gillespie started to move around the desk toward the door. As he passed the corner of the desk, he stopped the Sergeant without looking back. Had caught the door and slammed it shut. The door slammed in Gillespie's face like a final answer. Gillespie sat down on the desk and dropped his head in his hands. In the darkness, his own hands had created; he could see only the image of Osgood's face, the eyes an unforgiving foreign blue, piercing the darkness, fixed and staring like no other eyes in the world.

## CHAPTER TEN

Gillespie waited at the desk for the end of the night's activity. His senses quickened, no echoes in his mind, behind his hands, complete darkness prevailed. He did not even hear the Sergeant come back into the office, but he moved with a wild reflex when the Sergeant rapped his right shoulder.

'Get up,' the Sergeant said. 'Get up and get going.'

Gillespie slid from the desk, turning his head to look at the door. 'I'll go,' he said slowly. 'But what happened in there?'

The Sergeant caught him by the shoulder and straightened him, with no sign of emotion in his face. He swept his left arm backhand, smacking the back of the hand against Gillespie's cheek.

'No questions,' the Sergeant said flatly. 'John's been hurt by that friend of yours. Now get going; we're going back to the barracks.'

Gillespie jumped into motion. He walked before the Sergeant, stepping rapidly. Outside in the cold night air, he walked faster. Behind him, he heard the Sergeant coming on. Just outside the barracks, Gillespie stumbled and fell, but he caught himself before the Sergeant could reach him.

'I'm sorry,' he said to the Sergeant. 'I'm all right.'

The Sergeant opened the big outside door and followed Gillespie into the hall. He closed the door behind him, but he did not turn on the houselights. He snapped off the flashlight when he went inside. He caught Gillespie in the hall and backed him up against a wall. Gillespie could feel the Sergeant's hot animal breath break against his face.

'I'm going to tell you something now,' the Sergeant said. 'And I want you to remember it. You hear me, Gillespie?'

'I can hear you,' Gillespie said, nodding his head in the dark.

'You're to keep your mouth shut, Gillespie. Don't talk to anyone about what's happened tonight, we'll talk to you tomorrow.'

All right Sergeant Gillespie said dully I'll be quiet

Don't make any mistakes Gillespie this is a serious matter

Gillespie felt the Sergeant move away the hot breath fell away from his face, leaving a sour smell in the air Gillespie looked down in the darkness wondering idly whether he had smelled liquor on the Sergeant's breath he thought about the smell of whiskey as he listened to the Sergeant open the inside door The Sergeant snapped the flashlight on again and showed Gillespie a path of light to the door

Hurry up the Sergeant said

The door closed behind Gillespie with a sound more solid than any he remembered the wire did not rattle in the frame Without thinking Gillespie started across the room stepping over the sleeping prisoners He touched the third man he tried to pass and he stumbled against a fourth both woke with him and sat up cursing

What the hell said one Where are you going for Christ's sake! said the other

Gillespie mumbled and stepped back the complaints seemed unanswerable He turned slowly and went back to the door He remained standing for almost a minute slowly calculating ways of reaching his blanket but he could think of no way instead of seeing the darkness of the big room he saw the brightly lighted office lit up for visitors some where outside in the night Finally with a sigh he sank down to the floor He moved slowly across the floor squirming from hips to hands against the cold surface until he was past the door then he set his back against the wall and closed his eyes there was no transition from darkness to darkness He saw no more with his eyes open than with his eyes closed

It was only two hours until the room was wakened during that time Gillespie managed to sleep at intervals He had no nightmares and he had no dreams but he was glad when he heard movement in the hall he stood up before anyone else in the room He looked beyond the light for Sgt Cann but he saw an unfamiliar face he looked around the big room searching the darkness and even the room seemed unfamiliar His body ached He was very sleepy As he went out through the opened doors, he closed his mind against all his memories

Gillespie moved mechanically through the morning He allowed only a few impressions to reach him the cold wind the spongy ground, the blue sky He did not marvel at the blue sky although it was the first clear day he had seen for a month there were no clouds anywhere After breakfast he worked quietly he did not ask himself any questions and he did not miss Lt Camber and Sgt

Cann he held himself suspended from his corruption He shut up his mind against all the world

Until noon he was successful At noon the little Italian Nicoletti cornered him in the latrine where he had gone to conceal himself from the eyes of the company Nicoletti called loudly from the door to the latrine

Hey Gillespie!

Gillespie turned his back as he heard Nicoletti approach the light footsteps had a marching sound like a regiment in review on the stone floor

I've got news Nicoletti said Jesus have I got the news! His bald head bobbed in the bright light And I'll tell it without asking Nicoletti went on Do you want to hear it?

Do we need any news? Gillespie asked I didn't come here for news

I know I know Nicoletti said You probably know it already but do you know where the Lieutenant is? Or the Sergeant? That's my news that's what I know Nicoletti looked up grinning so that the corners of his eyes were folded under laughing eyelids

Gillespie with a slow and painful movement drew his right hand across his eyes he waited for the momentary darkness that came with his hand and he enjoyed it as it passed I don't know Nick he said quietly Why don't you tell me?

They're with the Colonel they've been there all morning

And why are they there Nick? Did you hear about that? Do you know all about it now so that you can tell me?

That's all I know for certain Nicoletti said I could tell you what I heard though He moved slowly closer to Gillespie he reached up and whispered in Gillespie's ear I've heard one of the guards was hurt last night it's just a rumor I've heard Nicoletti stepped back not grinning any more he looked up at Gillespie withdrawing his eagerness into his curiosity And I thought you might be able to tell me something about that he went on I saw you leave the barracks last night with that new guard

And you think I might have gotten the guard?

O no! Nicoletti said I thought you might know who did that's all That's all I meant Gillespie

I know Gillespie said with a wave of his hand With sudden irritation he added Why don't you go now Nicoletti? I've had your news Gillespie set his eyes on Nicoletti's bald head You with your news Gillespie said angrily You with your news and not knowing anything go on! Leave me alone get out now!

Nicoletti jumped back astonished and hurt at the door he pruned as he saw that Gillespie had not moved What's the matter with you? Nicoletti

asked. He touched his hand to the doorknob in preparation but he did not move.

Gillespie looked across the room directing his stare like a line thrown across rough water in a storm. He saw Nicoletti as if he had never seen him before. He passed his hand over his eyes again and spoke more quietly. 'I don't know Nick,' he said. 'I'm sorry I talked to you that way.'

'That's all right,' Nicoletti said nervously from the door. 'Think nothing of it.'

'Come on back a minute then,' Gillespie said. His own voice came back to him like an echo from a remote mountain enriched and vigorous with meanings he had not intended. He looked down from Nicoletti's bald head to the shy nervous face below it. He searched the face for a benevolence he could not believe but he could not determine whether he saw it or not. 'Come on back a minute Nick,' he said again. He watched as Nicoletti regretfully abandoned the door and moved hesitantly toward him. 'Do you want to know what happened last night Nick?' Gillespie asked. 'I could tell you.'

'You don't have to tell me,' Nicoletti answered. 'But I'll listen.'

'All right Nick, I'll tell you. A guard was hurt last night and I was there.'

'And did you do it?' Nicoletti asked ferociously. He stepped back as he spoke as if he feared a blow but he stopped as he saw Gillespie standing as before.

'But that's all I can tell you,' Gillespie said. 'I was told not to tell any more or even talk at all. You understand Nick?'

'Who did it then?' Nicoletti asked eagerly. 'If you didn't do it, who did?'

Gillespie shook his head not in negation as if puzzled. 'Why I don't know Nick, I haven't made up my mind about that.'

'You don't know?' Nicoletti said incredulously. He stepped back indignantly toward the door. 'Are you kidding me?'

'I said I haven't made up my mind yet Nick!'

'But you saw it done!' Nicoletti said angrily. 'You said you saw it!'

'I'm sorry Nick, I've told you all I know.'

'Well, all right then,' Nicoletti said. He stepped back again rubbing the belt of hair that grew above his ears. 'I have to go fix my blanket,' he said uncertainly. 'I think I'd better go tend to it.'

'All right Nick, I won't stop you.'

'I'll see you Gillespie.'

'Sure Nick, You know where to find me.'

Gillespie was pleased to see a familiar face among all the new strangers. He started to move toward the door before the Sergeant called. When he heard his name he answered eagerly.

'Gillespie?'

'Here I am, Sergeant.'

Gillespie presented himself at the wire door. 'I'm ready, Sergeant,' he said.

The Sergeant opened the door for him without speaking and followed him out the big outside door. Gillespie stopped outside without turning while the Sergeant set the locks. 'We're going to the office,' the Sergeant said firmly. 'You know where it is.'

'There was no one in the office when the Sergeant opened the door. Go on in,' the Sergeant said. 'We'll wait here.'

The room was very cold. There was a sifting of grey ashes on the floor beneath the stove powdered in the crevices of the new flooring. Without being told Gillespie moved toward the desk. Beyond the desk the door to the inner room was closed. Gillespie could see the latch set between the door and the frame. He shuddered and turned from the door to face the Sergeant.

'I have something to say to you, Sergeant,' Gillespie said. He looked down at his feet amazed at his calmness but pleased with his resolution. As he thought about the night before with its horrors he could make a pleasant comparison with his present state. He was sure of his condition.

'I'm not interested,' the Sergeant answered in a cold voice. 'I haven't asked you any questions.'

Gillespie looked up in astonishment. 'What's the matter?' he asked. 'I've got to talk to you, Sergeant!'

'I don't think you have anything to say to me,' the Sergeant said.

'But I do,' Gillespie said anxiously. 'It's a matter of great importance, Sergeant. I've been thinking about it all day.'

'I don't want to hear it,' the Sergeant said. 'I don't want to have anything to do with you.'

Gillespie watched as the Sergeant turned to him. He was satisfied to see awakening interest in the Sergeant's face. 'Will you listen now, Sergeant?'

The Sergeant looked Gillespie up and down. He stroked his chin and sat down in his chair at the wall. 'So you have a confession?' he said. 'And what do you have to confess, Gillespie?'

Gillespie smiled involuntarily as he caught the Sergeant's eyes. He remembered his talk with Os good on the evening before the last interrogation, something of his mood then came back to him. He remembered Osgood's approving smile as he had said that he intended to confess to his actions. The smile came to him from a great distance but in a

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

Gillespie was relieved when he saw Sgt. Cann enter the barracks before the work call in the afternoon.

fierce clarity of memory Gillespie felt the same sudden beatitude he had known before

It's a long story Gillespie began It'll take a little time

The Sergeant looked at his watch We have half an hour he said The Lieutenant won't be here until two o'clock Go ahead Gillespie I'm listening

All right Sergeant Gillespie paused as he chose his words the whole memory of the incident in the Colonel's room came back to him his mind was perfectly clear Each incident fell into place in the days pattern as he closed his right hand he could almost feel the weight of the glass from the picture frame compacted with the toilet paper into a solid mass he remembered the sharp pain he had felt from the cuts in his hand First of all Gillespie continued I'll say that it has nothing to do with the drawing on the barracks wall it's something that has nothing to do with that drawing

The Sergeant looked up in surprise What did you say?

I said it had nothing to do with the drawing on the barracks wall the drawing of the horse in charcoal

Then why do you tell me? the Sergeant asked His features were drawn tight as if closed over un-revealed knowledges

Because you should know it Sergeant It has to do with what happened last night I know it does Gillespie looked at the Sergeant waiting for words but the Sergeant only looked at him the Sergeant's face was blank and drawn his cheekbones showed white through his dark skin

It's about a photograph that belongs to the Colonel Gillespie said I want to tell you about that

I'm not stopping you Gillespie the Sergeant said quietly Go right ahead

I want to tell you that I broke it Gillespie said suddenly and as the words came out he breathed in deeply the stale sodden air of the little room worked a cool blessing in his lungs Gillespie gasped a little

I said go ahead the Sergeant said grimly You don't have to stop

I'll tell you all about it Gillespie said breathlessly Through his exhilaration he could not see the Sergeant clearly he saw only a figure poised on the chair waiting an intelligence behind a dark face Gillespie started the story at the beginning when he and Osgood had started washing the walls of the Colonel's bedroom after a time he stopped watching the Sergeant's face he told his story to his shoes and to the floor The memories rose to his mind clothed already in the necessary words he spoke a swift monologue He spent no more time with the breaking of the picture than with his mo-

tives for concealing it he provided no emphases for the actions he described no deed was darker than another It took him fifteen minutes to complete his narrative and when he finished he did not raise his head He stood humble before the Sergeant as before a priest or an executioner The Sergeant waited for almost thirty seconds before he spoke

Is that all Gillespie? he asked then Do you have anything more to say?

That's all Sergeant I've told you everything

May I ask you a question then? the Sergeant said I'm not quite clear on all of the details

Anything Sergeant I'm glad to be rid of it all

Then did you say that you denied breaking the picture to Johnson last night? When you knew that Johnson was sure to blame Osgood for it?

That's right Sergeant It's all my fault everything that happened last night was my fault

I see the Sergeant said And now you want to make it right to both of them Is that right?

That's what I want to do Sergeant I think that's my duty

Gillespie looked up at the Sergeant he watched the Sergeant rise from his chair and turn to him without surprise, Gillespie waited for the Sergeant to speak

Then there's something you should know Gillespie the Sergeant said He paused and waited for Gillespie's attention to come to a sharp focus upon him Are you listening Gillespie?

I'm listening Sergeant

Then hear this Gillespie hear this! Johnson is dead! He died this morning at eleven o'clock! You're too late with your confessions Gillespie too late to help anyone!

Gillespie blinked and shook his head like a steel under the butcher's hammer He shook his head three times the third time he snapped his head as if to tear it loose from his shoulders O no! he cried O my God in heaven! He stepped back reeling within the monumental shock as he turned his eyes caught Sgt Cann standing grimly with his feet set wide apart on the floor Is that the truth? Gillespie called Is that the truth man?

I was there when he died the Sergeant said And I heard him say goodbye

Gillespie turned away as he bent down the desk caught his weight, he hooked his body slowly over the edge of the desk The Sergeant's words rang in his ears echoed from ear to ear carrying all the richness of the Sergeant's big voice magnified about them Slowly Gillespie settled himself on the desk his body turned him without his volition again toward the Sergeant Gillespie's eyes opened again to comprehend the Sergeant's accusation

Why didn't you tell me before! Gillespie said Why did you let me go on with it? O my God why

didn't you tell me? Gillespie's words rang out in the room so loudly that he could not hear them they came back blinding his mind with echoes in the silence that expanded to take them in Gillespie heard them again and again and he could not stop them Before his eyes, the figure of the Sergeant was only a figure the figure changed very slowly second by second into an articulated human being

Why didn't you tell me! Gillespie shouted again, this time his words had no echoes The Sergeant jumped with the sound

I told you once! the Sergeant said angrily Do you want it changed by different telling?

You should have told me earlier Gillespie said brokenly Bent by the desk and warped in his agony, Gillespie caught his head in his hands he swayed slowly from the hips weaving his torso from side to side

You've no complaints anyway, Gillespie the Sergeant said What right have you to complain with one man dead and another to hang after trial? Do you hear me Gillespie?

I know it I know it Gillespie said It's all over now

That's right Gillespie so don't complain Be quiet be a man!

Gillespie quivered with each word In a clear region of his mind he saw that he should weep, but he could not channel his grief into tears the edges of his eyes were dry He saw very clearly that the bitter salt would help him but he could not find his justification The act of Osgood appeared as an act of his own, so that he felt responsibility rather than the consequential sorrow He was not meant for the chief mourner he was meant for the gallows before his friend He thought with amazement of what the Sergeant had said everything had happened to others he alone remained unscathed He dropped his hands from his head and looked up at the Sergeant

What can I do? he asked What can I do now to help him?

You can be quiet now, the Sergeant said savagely You can at least keep the peace

But it was all my fault I showed you that No body knew what I was doing I had everybody fooled that's why there was trouble Can't you see that Sergeant?

It's not my job to see that the Sergeant answered I never had a chance to know that poor devil Johnson All I know is that he was doing his duty a nice little guy now be quiet Gillespie!

But I have to show you Gillespie said It's very important that I show you

I said be quiet! I mean it now

Gillespie saw the Sergeant step toward him Gillespie did not move, with a sudden hope, he looked

for the Sergeant to strike him he anticipated the blow as the beginning of his expiation but the Sergeant stopped, hesitant opening and closing his hands and then stood staring at Gillespie

Do you hear me Gillespie? I want you to be quiet now until the Lieutenant comes that's all I want from you Gillespie The Sergeant turned quickly to his chair as he sat down Gillespie straightened himself on the desk he tried to remember all he knew of Lt Camber Seeing that Sgt Cann would do nothing because he comprehended nothing Gillespie directed his hopes toward Lt Camber, he summoned up all the images at his command But before he could manage a summation he remembered the Lieutenant's blue eyes, and the blue eyes chilled him his hopes disappeared in the memory that fitted perfectly across his memory of Osgood's eyes Gillespie could not pass the eyes and the image that grew around them Gillespie settled himself on the edge of the desk he watched the door to the hall He focussed the confusion in his mind upon the plain and palpable fact of the door it held steady for him the only steady thing in his world while he waited for the Lieutenant to come

## CHAPTER TWELVE

Lt Camber with his trousers newly pressed, with creases in the sleeves of his shirt and wearing the outer freshness of a new shave entered the office without knocking he closed the door behind him with a sharp gesture of his hand and wrist his heels hit the floor with a precise leathern click Gillespie having heard his steps in the hall was standing in front of the desk carefully in the position of attention

Attention! Sgt Cann called standing himself Stand at ease! the Lieutenant called

The Lieutenant seated himself behind the desk and Gillespie turned to face him Gillespie watched the Lieutenant's face with the utmost care He was a little surprised to see the Lieutenant appear so fresh and ready but he built his hopes on the Lieutenant's impassivity, forgetting unhappy possibilities as he read kindness and perception and sympathy in the Lieutenant's face

Well Gillespie, the Lieutenant began How are you today?

I'm all right sir Gillespie said slowly

I should imagine you would be Gillespie you at least are still at large The Lieutenant leaned back in his chair Do you agree Gillespie?

Before Gillespie could answer Sgt Cann stepped up to the desk raising his right hand for attention

Sir the Sergeant began I have something to tell you

Certainly, Sergeant the Lieutenant said in the same voice as before Tell it

Yes sir, the Sergeant said It concerns this man Gillespie it's something Gillespie told me before you got here

Just now?

He finished just before you came, sir It has to do with what happened last night

Just a moment then, Sergeant the Lieutenant said Perhaps Gillespie could tell it himself, how about that Sergeant?

I thought I could tell it quicker the Sergeant said Whatever you want, sir

I think I should like to hear it from Gillespie the Lieutenant said No slur upon you, Sergeant, you understand

O yes sir I understand

Then speak up, Gillespie! the Lieutenant said Tell me what you told the Sergeant

It's a long story Gillespie said I guess I'd better start at the beginning

By all means yes Start at the beginning Gillespie the Colonel won't be here until two thirty

Then the Colonel's coming! Gillespie said Will you let me talk to him Lieutenant? Gillespie bent forward over the desk bending all his powers with his body upon the Lieutenant's surprise I have to see him Lieutenant!

Stand back please! the Lieutenant said You must remain at attention while you're addressing an officer The Lieutenant looked up bobbing his head, as if to mark time to his own commands his blue eyes caught Gillespie and drove him back

O yes sir Gillespie said Only I must see the Colonel sir It's very important

'You may put your mind at ease then Gillespie the Colonel is coming for the one purpose of seeing and talking to you I'll say something about that later now your story

Hurrying and thinking beyond the Lieutenant to the dignity of the Colonel Gillespie repeated his story he found the phrases familiar It was like telling a lewd story time honored and rounded to perfection by selective repetition Everything came back As the story progressed Gillespie found again a part of the beatitude he had known as he had planned his confession, the recital of simple events diverted his mind from the consequences of the events Johnson appeared again as an impersonal dignitary who enjoyed shaving a bar of soap As good as the fierce and honorable man he had always been The murder was lost in lucidity

After Gillespie finished the Lieutenant remained silent he found his comforting pencil and examined the trademark

And is that all Gillespie? Are you quite finished now?

That's the whole story sir Gillespie said with dignity It's the truth as I know it sir and it was as bad as it sounds sir

It's an interesting story Gillespie the Lieutenant said I presume you wish to see the Colonel so that you can tell him the same story?

That's what I have to do sir Gillespie said

I'll put it before the Colonel for you the Lieutenant said Though you understand I am not myself interested in it do you realize that there may be consequences?

I don't care about that sir! I want to do what I can for Osgood though it's too late for Johnson

That's enough Gillespie! I advise you not to think about that the crime has been committed You can't expect to change that

I know sir! I want to tell my story and take the consequences

All right Gillespie Now no more of this Before the Colonel comes there are a few things I must tell you The Lieutenant juggled the pencil between his fingers and then set it up between his two hands, the point set in the left forefinger the eraser set in the palm of the right hand he examined the pencil as if it were a message in code laid out before his eyes While he watched the pencil the Lieutenant spoke in a soft voice First of all Gillespie you must watch your conduct the Colonel permits no liberties stand at attention always! As to what happened last night we want you to tell the truth no more I want you to remember that your friend Osgood provoked us in a manner which could properly have been punished with extreme severity The only pity is that we did not so punish him We will have to wait for that until after his trial Now these aren't instructions I want you to understand that these are only the dictates of decency Do you understand that Gillespie? The Lieutenant opened his hands and the pencil dropped to the desk clattered and rolled to a stop against a bottle of ink I want you to be clear in your mind Gillespie

While the Lieutenant had spoken Gillespie listened closely he waited for a word of anger or condemnation for a moment he comprehended only the outer meanings of what the Lieutenant had said Understanding that he had time to design his anger Gillespie hesitated he looked once at the Lieutenant's eyes and was appalled suddenly he was overwhelmed by the hypocrisy

The dictates of decency! he said I don't understand you sir!

You're to understand that I've said what I mean the Lieutenant answered There's no blood on my hands Gillespie

And will you let me tell my story, sir? I think the Colonel should hear it sir



You will talk to the Colonel and answer his questions, Gillespie at this time more than any other you will observe all the proprieties

Yes, sir Gillespie answered But I'll tell my story sir, I see my duty, sir!

You will answer questions Gillespie! the Lieutenant said angrily He stood up slowly rebuilding his dignity with each inch of elevation, he stood finally with his hands on his hips leaning forward across the desk By God Gillespie, he said I won't tolerate any more of this no more! The Lieutenant glared across the desk at Gillespie and then sank suddenly into his chair again As Gillespie watched, he saw the Lieutenant's shoulders shake, the tremor worked upward The Lieutenant reached up suddenly and passed his right hand across his forehead and as his hand fell toward the table, the Lieutenant closed the hand and swept it violently across the desk, striking the inkbottle from the table in a flat arc The inkbottle struck the wall beside the desk and bounced to the floor Gillespie watched as the inkbottle teetered on a corner and then slowly tipped over on its side Well pick it up! the Lieutenant said Pick it up Gillespie are you blind?

With a swift quiet gesture, Gillespie stooped over and picked up the inkbottle and set it on the desk

Don't make me speak again, Gillespie, the Lieutenant said wearily My God! Can't you see I've been through a great deal this last day and night? Sgt Cann take this man into the back room and keep him quiet there until I call you

Working within a catastrophic disappointment Gillespie stepped toward the corner of the desk he watched the Lieutenant who held his head down, propped on the heel of his right hand the Lieutenant was curling the fingers of his hand, as if to relieve a pain Gillespie opened the door to the back room himself he was surprised to find the door unlocked He turned to hold the door for the Sergeant and as he moved the Lieutenant spoke again

I want you out of my sight for a while the Lieutenant said quietly 'Lord! Sometimes I can't believe I'm the proper owner of a home with three bedrooms and two baths go on Gillespie! I'm too tired to look at you

Uneasily Gillespie slipped past the door He wondered why the room had not been sealed it could have been done, he thought if not for evidence at least for a memorial He decided bitterly that it was fitting for him to return to the place of his disaster, the circle began to close, leaving only a narrow arc yet remaining to be comprehended As he heard the Sergeant come through the door, Gillespie tried to imagine what a house with three bedrooms and two baths looked like but as the door closed, he forgot the problem he went to the center of the room and

waited and when he heard the Colonel enter the outer office with an accompaniment of salutes and greetings he did not raise his head nor did he look at Sgt Cann Caught up in the circle of the higher powers he did not heed the presence of the Sergeant and the Sergeant said nothing to him Without fear, Gillespie listened to the sound of voices from the next room Without anger at the Lieutenant he fashioned from the remnants of his resolution a new hope he did not after all know the Colonel anything was possible He thought of Osgood and in that memory he found forces to guide him in his efforts at assistance As he waited to be called he anticipated the familiar tremblings in his left leg but they did not come the firmness in his leg worked upward to his mind When the Lieutenant knocked on the door and called, Gillespie stepped forward confidently, like the groom at a wedding

The Colonel was seated in the Lieutenant's chair behind the Lieutenant's desk, when Gillespie entered the room the Colonel's face was red as remembered and sharp as ever Gillespie stood straight before the Colonel for a full minute before the Colonel spoke

I am here today on serious business the Colonel began gravely 'A murder next to rape the worst of crimes has been committed in my command It is my duty to see that the guilty man is punished properly and in the interests of that duty I will ask you certain questions Gillespie and deliver three lectures Lieutenant Camber am I right in believing that this man did not see the actual crime?

Yes sir you're right sir He was here in the office with me at the time it happened

Very good the Colonel said Now Gillespie, the first question did you observe the prisoner Osgood enter the inner room accompanied by the guard Johnson? Answer yes or no and no more than either please

Why yes sir Gillespie began

That will be enough Gillespie Second question did anyone enter that room before Lt Camber?

No sir

Very good Gillespie Those are the questions Now in the interests of a better personal understanding of this affair I will listen to what you have described to Lt Camber as your story but since I have had that story from the Lieutenant already I wish you to be brief what have you to say for yourself Gillespie?

Gillespie was astonished, from the first word the Colonel had spoken Gillespie had felt himself buried under a foreign and unpleasant comprehension of his actions the Colonel had overpowered him He could not find his tongue For almost thirty sec

onds as he felt his own inadequacy and the Colonel's control of every thing and every man in the room, he tried to form his thoughts

Speak up man the Colonel said finally Surely you understand that I have other affairs than this to tend to

Yes sir Gillespie said hurriedly It's only that I want to help Osgood sir he finished awkwardly He looked down at the Colonel hoping desperately for understanding

I expect so the Colonel said drily However I find your present attitude hard to understand in view of your past actions Gillespie

That's it! Gillespie said suddenly excitedly That's just it sir I want to explain to you about Osgood sir I want to tell you why it wasn't his fault sir yes that's it sir!

Then do it quickly Gillespie that's what I asked for you know

Yes sir Gillespie said What I want to say is that it wasn't Osgood's fault at all he couldn't help himself And it wasn't Johnson's fault either It was my fault sir! Gillespie almost smiled That's what I've been meaning to say all along sir

You may continue the Colonel said

You see sir Osgood was right all along he told me the right thing to do I should have come out with it right away and taken my chances And last night after I lied to Johnson Osgood was caught, he was caught because he wouldn't say anything for himself he wouldn't fight back at me sir! He wouldn't fight back at me when I was the attacker, sir! Do you see that sir?

Go on the Colonel said I'm listening quite carefully

And that's my story Gillespie said quietly I think Osgood was defending himself from me, sir it was I who got him in the trouble and he could never forget that he knew how to fight I can't think of anything more! Do you understand sir?

And have you nothing more to say, Gillespie? the Colonel asked

Gillespie nodded his head That's all sir I want to help as much as I can now

I see the Colonel said Perhaps now it's time for my lectures if you will listen carefully Gillespie I will proceed

O I'll listen sir! I'll listen!

Indeed you will the Colonel said To be sure you will! The Colonel looked down once at his hands folded and quiescent on the desktop The first lecture concerns discipline, Gillespie, discipline considered in its general implications, and in its practical applications to this crime I am particularly concerned that you hear and understand this lecture Gillespie are you listening now?

Yes sir!

The basic fact relating to discipline is its necessity the Colonel began and the basic law of discipline is that it shall be rigorous I have adjusted my life to this fact and this law I know my relation to both Is that quite clear Gillespie?

Yes sir! I do understand you, sir!

The practical application of my knowledge to this crime is just as clear Gillespie When I saw that my photograph had disappeared from its appointed place on the day you were working in my quarters, I was able to understand the implications of the facts which I observed Johnson was in charge of the detail and consequently of the house, the men and my personal belongings the absence of the picture revealed a dereliction of duty for which Johnson was responsible I therefore relieved him of his position and assigned all the men on that detail to special work of an unpleasant nature Because I also comprehend the nature of justice, I assigned Johnson to this company in the prison so that he could work out a proper adjustment of his guilt to the specific guilt of the man who had broken the picture Only a vindictive and savage crime could have unhinged the operation of this plan, and that crime has now been committed Such a crime can never be forgiven and I shall not forgive it Gillespie! Do you, Lt Camber think I have made myself clear?

Yes sir the Lieutenant answered Abundantly clear sir

And you, Gillespie have I made myself clear to you?

Gillespie looked down but he could not speak his lips moved but no words came

I think I have the Colonel said with cold finality Now my second lecture Before I begin, I shall say that this will be painful to me as I trust it will be painful to you I cannot look complacently upon evil I will speak of you now Gillespie although I find it difficult you are a vile creature Gillespie Your friend will die because of you and in your place the rope will find him as surely as we are here now in this room And justice will be served when he hangs he has murdered a fellow man, he is marked with the mark of Cain You Gillespie escape unscathed it makes me wonder at our system Gillespie! Your safety almost destroys my belief! The Colonel lifted his right hand above the desk closed it in a fist and crashed it down on the table And you cannot answer! the Colonel said triumphantly You know I am right Gillespie! Speak if you can!

Rigid stiff running with sweat Gillespie looked toward the wall the wall was blank before him I just want to help he said I'll take the consequences

The Colonel snapped himself straight in his chair

But don't you see Gillespie he began slowly, don't you see Gillespie that there will be no consequences? There will be no consequences! the Colonel shouted

Suddenly showing embarrassment the Colonel subsided into the chair he coughed once and then was silent His shoulders rose and fell with the wild leap of his lungs His thick chest expanding with air and oratory, filled his shirt drew the buttons tight for almost a minute no one spoke The Colonel watched Gillespie, at first with anger inexpressible, and then slowly with comprehension his lips drew tight across his teeth

No! said the Colonel It can't be but it is! Lieutenant Cumber look can it be remorse? Is it remorse that I see in that face? The Colonel twisted in his chair commanding the Lieutenant to move with every motion of his own the Lieutenant stepped slowly forward his mouth curled over a beginning smile he held his face with his full reaction in waiting for an indication from the Colonel He inspected Gillespie's shoes and then let his eyes move upward to Gillespie's face he nodded his head twice

Why yes, sir! the Lieutenant said 'I believe it is sir! Slowly the Lieutenant permitted his grin to grow then he laughed letting the sound roll out into the room Why yes sir the Lieutenant said again He tossed his head back and laughed His throat moved shuttling with laughter

Lieutenant! the Colonel thundered Stop that! I order you to stop laughing! Have you gone insane, Lieutenant?

The Lieutenant's laughter stopped abruptly he looked down at the Colonel his mouth fell open and then snapped shut

'Why yes, sir, the Lieutenant began Of course sir

I said stop laughing the Colonel said loudly Your conduct is incredible, Lieutenant it is insupportable Are you unable to perceive the gravity of this situation?

O I'm sorry, sir the Lieutenant said I couldn't help it sir

The Colonel watched as the Lieutenant stepped back then the Colonel turned again to Gillespie, driving the force of his eyes upon him 'Now Gillespie, he said Do you see what you have done? Even my officers are corrupted Gillespie look at me no not at the wall, not at the door nor the desk at me, Gillespie Look! Look!

Gillespie's head moved obediently, as his head

bent, the tears rolled freely down his cheeks, into the corners of his mouth to penetrate his lips and leave a sediment of salt on his tongue he closed his eyes and the tears ran on through his darkness The Colonel's voice came to him through complete darkness but he heard every word that was spoken to him

Gillespie the Colonel said I think perhaps you know it now there will be no consequences! Neither the picture of my family nor the picture on the barracks wall will touch you there will be no consequences today, or tomorrow, or on any other day that you will know do you hear me, Gillespie?

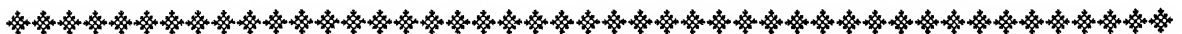
I hear you, Gillespie said slowly I hear you sir

Then you are prepared I think, for my last lecture Gillespie I had intended one speech for you but as I see your condition I think another is in order a brief lecture on something you should already know, but which you have apparently forgotten a brief lecture on the position of the soldier at attention is required The Colonel's voice was dry and uninflected As if reciting from memory the Colonel directed his voice into the room The position of the soldier at attention is determined by the following orders the heels will be held together the feet will be held at a forty-five degree angle The legs will be held straight the head up shoulders back hands at the seams of the trousers The soldier will look like a soldier on extremest duty Now Gillespie, stand to my order stand at attention! Stand!

Yes sir Gillespie said He could feel the order taking hold in his body, he felt his legs stiffen his head rise he looked past the Colonel's head to the door to the inner room He was confident that he was standing well but he did not expect applause He was neither wakeful nor sleepy his eyes were open but his mind was asleep He was prepared to stand for a long time if that too should be required of him

## STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 What characteristics can you identify in Gillespie?
- 2 What is the nature of the moral problem faced by Gillespie?
- 3 From what elements in the story does the nightmarish quality stem?
- 4 In what ways and by what techniques does Loomis eliminate all but the objective elements of reality in his story?
- 5 What is the function of the long speech by the commanding officer at the end? Is it necessary? Why?
- 6 Compare this story with Kafka's *Metamorphosis* in technique atmosphere purposes



## ANALYSES OF NOVELS

## Tom Jones

*Henry Fielding*

ANALYSIS BY R S CRANE

THE CONCEPT OF PLOT AND  
THE PLOT OF TOM JONES<sup>1</sup>

OF ALL the plots constructed by English novelists that of *Tom Jones* has probably elicited the most unqualified praise. There is no fable whatever, wrote Fielding's first biographer that affords in its solution such artful states of suspense, such beautiful turns of surprise, such unexpected incidents and such sudden discoveries sometimes apparently embarrassing but always promising the catastrophe and eventually promoting the completion of the whole.<sup>2</sup> Not since the days of Homer it seemed to James Beattie, had the world seen a more artful epick fable. The characters and adventures are wonderfully diversified yet the circumstances are all so natural and rise so easily from one another and co-operate with so much regularity in bringing on, even while they seem to retard the catastrophe that the curiosity of the reader grows more and more impatient as the story advances till at last it becomes downright anxiety. And when we get to the end we are amazed to find that of so many incidents there should be so few superfluous, that in such variety of fiction there should be so great probability and that so complex a tale should be perspicuously conducted and with perfect unity of design.<sup>3</sup> These are typical of the eulogies that preceded and were summed up in Coleridge's famous verdict in 1834. What a master of composition Fielding was! Upon my word I think the Oedipus Tyrannus, The Alchemist, and Tom Jones the three most perfect plots ever planned.<sup>4</sup> More recent writers have tended to speak less hyperbolically and like Scott, to insist that even the high praise due to the construction and arrangement of the story is inferior to that claimed by the

truth force, and spirit of the characters.<sup>5</sup> but it is hard to think of any important modern discussion of the novel that does not contain at least a few sentences on Fielding's ever to be praised skill as an architect of plot.<sup>6</sup>

## I

The question I wish to raise concerns not the justice of any of these estimates but rather the nature and critical adequacy of the conception of plot in general and of the plot of *Tom Jones* in particular that underlies most if not all of them. Now it is a striking fact that in all the more extended discussions of Fielding's masterpiece since 1749 the consideration of the plot has constituted merely one topic among several others, and a topic moreover so detached from the rest that once it is disposed of the consideration of the remaining elements of character thought diction, and narrative technique invariably proceeds without further reference to it. The characters are indeed agents of the story but their values are assessed apart from this, in terms sometimes of their degrees of conformity to standards of characterization in literature generally sometimes of the conceptions of morality they embody sometimes of their relation to Fielding's experiences or prejudices sometimes of their reflection taken collectively of the England of their time. The other elements are isolated similarly both from the plot and from one another what is found important in the thought, whether of the characters or of the narrator, is normally not its function as an artistic device but its doctrinal content as a sign of the philosophy of Fielding the style and the ironical tone of the narrative are frequently praised but solely as means to the general literary satisfaction of the reader and, what is perhaps more significant the wonderful comic force of the novel which all have delighted to commend, is assumed to be independent of the plot and a matter exclusively of particular incidents, of the characters of some but not all, of the persons, and of occasional passages of burlesque or witty writing.<sup>7</sup>

All this points to a strictly limited definition of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 327

<sup>2</sup> The phrase is Oliver Elton's in *A Survey of English Literature 1730-1780* (New York 1928) I 195. See also Wilbur L. Cross *The History of Henry Fielding* (New Haven 1918) II 160-61. Aurelien Digeon *Les Romans de Fielding* (Paris 1923) pp. 210-16. Elizabeth Jenkins *Henry Fielding* (London 1947) pp. 57-58 and George Sherburn in *A Literary History of England* ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York and London 1948) pp. 957-58. cf. his interesting Introduction to the Modern Library College Editions reprint of *Tom Jones* (New York 1950) pp. ix-x.

<sup>3</sup> The explanation of this procedure lies partly in a still unwritten chapter in the history of criticism. When works of prose fiction became objects of increasing critical attention in the eighteenth century it was natural that the new form should be discussed in terms of its obvious analogies both positive and negative to drama and epic and that critics of novels should avail themselves consequently of the familiar categories of fable characters sentiments and language which had been long established in the neoclassical tradition as standard devices for the analysis of

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted with alterations and additions from the *Journal of General Education* January 1950.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Murphy (1762) quoted in Frederic T. Blanchard *Fielding the Novelist: A Study in Historical Criticism* (New Haven 1927) p. 161.

<sup>3</sup> *Dissertations Moral and Critical* (1783) quoted in Blanchard pp. 222-23.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 320-21.

plot as something that can be abstracted, for critical purposes, from the moral qualities of the characters and the operations of their thought. This something is merely the material continuity of the story considered in relation to the general pleasure we take in any fiction when our curiosity about the impending events is aroused, sustained, and then satisfied to a degree or in a manner we could not anticipate. A plot in this sense—the sense in which modern novelists pride themselves on having got rid of plot—can be pronounced good in terms simply of the variety of incidents it contains, the amount of suspense and surprise it evokes, and the ingenuity with which all the happenings in the beginning and middle are made to contribute to the resolution at the end. Given the definition, indeed, no other criteria are possible and no others have been used

by any of the critics of *Tom Jones* since the eighteenth century who have declared its plot to be one of the most perfect ever planned. They have uniformly judged it as interesting story merely—and this whether as by most of the earlier writers the felicitous contrivance and happy extrication of the story is taken to be the chief beauty of the novel or whether as generally nowadays preference is given to its qualities of character and thought. It is clearly of plot in no completer sense than this that Oliver Elton is thinking when he remarks that, although some have cared little for this particular excellence and think only of Partridge, timorous, credulous, garrulous, faithful and an injured man of Squire Western and of the night at Upton, and of wit and humour everywhere, still the common reader for whom Fielding wrote, cares a great deal

tragedies, comedies and heroic poems. In remote origin these distinctions derived from the four qualitative parts which Aristotle had shown to be common to tragedy and epic (cf. *Poetics* 5.1449b15 ff. 24.1459b8-11). In the course of their transmission to the eighteenth century, however—as a result partly of the influence of Horace and partly of a complex of more general crises operative from the beginnings of Aristotelian commentary in the Renaissance (see *Critics and Criticism* [original ed.] pp. 319-48)—the analytical significance of the scheme had undergone a radical change. For Aristotle concerned with the construction of poetic wholes that afford peculiar pleasures through their imitations of different species of human actions, the four terms had designated the essential elements upon the proper handling and combination of which, relatively to the intended overall effect, the quality of a tragedy or epic necessarily depends. They are distinct parts in the sense of being variable factors in the complex problem of composing works which, when completed, will produce their effects synthetically as organic wholes. Hence it is that in the *Poetics* they are treated not discretely as co-ordinate topics but hierarchically in a causal sequence of form, matter or end, means, relationships in which plot is the most inclusive or architectonic of the four, subsuming all the others as its poetic matter, in which character while subordinated materially to plot and effect is similarly a formal or organizing principle with respect to thought and diction, in which thought while functioning as matter relatively to character, incident and effect is the form which immediately controls the choice and arrangement of language, in so far as this is employed as a means to imitative rather than ornamental ends, and in which diction, though necessarily having a form of its own by virtue of its rhythmical, syntactical and stylistic figuration, is the underlying matter which, as significant speech at once makes possible all the other parts and is in turn mediated or immediately controlled by them. The nature of the four elements is such, in short, that although a critic in his analysis of a given tragedy or epic may take any one of them as his primary object of attention, he can make no adequate judgment of the poet's success or failure with respect to it without bringing into his discussion all the others to which it is related directly or indirectly, either as matter or as form.

Of this causal scheme only the general outlines survived in the doctrines of subsequent critics in the Aristotelian line. The distinction of the four parts was retained, and along with it the substance of the rules which Aristotle had formulated for their handling, what disappeared was precisely the rationale which in the *Poetics* had justified not only the rules but the discrimination, definition and ordering of the parts themselves. In its place various new principles and schemes of analysis were substituted by different theorists and critics, the general tendency of which was to make of poetics a practical rather than a productive art and hence to reduce tragedy and epic to modes of ethical or rhetorical discourse designed to serve each in its specialized way the common purposes of all such discourse, namely, the delight and instruction of mankind. The consequence was that although critics continued to distinguish aspects of tragedies and epics that corresponded roughly with the Aristotelian parts and although these served to determine the framework of the discussion at least in

the most systematic treatises and essays, the discussion itself no longer turned on the nature and functional interrelations of the four parts as elements in an artistic synthesis of a particular kind, but on the general qualities which the poet ought to aim at in each, in order to enhance its independent power of pleasing, moving and edifying spectators or readers. And when this apparatus was carried over from the statement of tragic or epic theory to the practical criticism of tragedies or epics (as in Addison's papers on *Paradise Lost* or Pope's Preface to the *Iliad*), the disjunction of the four elements tended to become still more marked. They were no longer functional parts in an organic whole, but so many relatively discrete *loci* of critical praise and blame, and critics could write *seriatim* of the beauties or defects in the fable, characters, sentiments and language of a given tragedy or heroic poem without assuming any synthesizing principles more specific than the decorum of the genre or the necessity (e.g.) that the sentiments expressed should be consonant with the characters of the persons who uttered them (many illustrations of the procedure may be found in H. T. Swedenberg Jr. *The Theory of the Epic in England 1650-1800* [Berkeley and Los Angeles 1944], cf. the Index under Fable or action). Characters, Sentiments in the epic and Language of the epic.)

It was at this stage in the history of the Aristotelian parts that they entered into the criticism both general and applied of modern prose fiction. See for example, besides many notices of novels in the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review*, the anonymous *Critical Remarks on Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa and Pamela* (1754), Arthur Murphy's *Essay on the Life and Genius of Henry Fielding in The Works of Henry Fielding* (1762), James Beattie's *On Fable and Romance* in his *Dissertations* (1783), and John More's *View of the Commencement and Progress of Romance* in *The Works of Tobias Smollett* (1797). In spite of the general indifference of criticism since about 1750 to questions specific to the various poetic kinds (see above pp. 14-459), the tradition of method thus established has persisted, especially in academic circles, to the present day; its influence still lingers in the topical divisions of treatises or textbooks dealing with the technique of fiction, and it still provides the commonplaces of a good many studies of novelists and novels (e.g. the pages on *Tom Jones* already referred to in Elton's *Survey*). The undoubted deficiencies of the scheme (in its neoclassical degradation) as an instrument of critical analysis and judgment have not passed unnoticed in recent years, particularly among critics of the *Scrutiny* group who point out justly enough that plot and character are treated in a fashion that abstracts them unduly from the continuum of the novelist's language through which alone they affect us. These critics, however, are usually content to offer as a positive substitute for the traditional scheme only a still more extreme reduction of Aristotle's principles, in which everything in the discussion of a novel is made to turn on the relations between diction in the sense of the author's verbal arrangements and thought in the sense of the experience which he communicates by imposing the pattern of his own sensibility on the reader through the medium of language. See for example, Martin Turnell, *The Language of Fiction*, *Times Literary Supplement*, August 19, 1949, pp. 579-81, reprinted in his *Novel in France* (New York 1951).

and cares rightly, for plot and so did Sophocles.<sup>8</sup>

When plot is conceived thus narrowly in abstraction from the peculiar characters and mental processes of the agents it must necessarily have for the critic only a relatively external relation to the other aspects of the work. That is why in most discussions of *Tom Jones* the critical treatment of the plot (as distinguished from mere summary of the happenings) is restricted to the kind of enthusiastic general appreciation of which I have given some examples supplemented by more particular remarks on various episodes notably those of the Man of the Hill and of Mrs Fitzpatrick which appear to do little to advance the action. The plot in these discussions is simply one of several sources of interest and pleasure afforded by a novel peculiarly rich in pleasurable and interesting things, and the problem of its relation to the other ingredients is evaded altogether. Occasionally, it is true the question has been faced but even in those critics like W. L. Cross and Oliver Elton, who have made it most explicit the formulas suggested never give to the plot of *Tom Jones* the status of more than an external and enveloping form in relation to which the rest of the novel is content. It is not as they see it an end but a means and they describe it variously, having no language but metaphor for the purpose as a framework in which character (which is Fieldings' real bill of fare) is set as a device essentially artificial for bringing on the stage real men and women as a mere mechanism which except now and then in the last two books does not obtrude, for keeping readers alert through six volumes.<sup>9</sup>

I do not believe however that it is necessary to remain content with this very limited and abstract definition of plot or with the miscellaneous and fragmentized criticism of works like *Tom Jones* that has always followed from it. I shall assume that any novel or drama not constructed on didactic principles<sup>10</sup> is a composite of three elements, which unite to determine its quality and effect—the things that are imitated (or rendered) in it, the linguistic medium in which they are imitated and the manner or technique of imitation, and I shall assume further that the things imitated necessarily involve human beings interacting with one another in ways determined by and in turn affecting their moral characters and their states of mind (i.e., their reasonings, emotions and attitudes). If this is granted we may say that the plot of any novel or drama is the particular temporal synthesis effected by the writer of the elements of action character and thought that constitute the matter of his invention. It is impos-

sible therefore, to state adequately what any plot is unless we include in our formula all three of the elements or causes of which the plot is the synthesis, and it follows also that plots will differ in structure according as one or another of the three causal ingredients is employed as the synthesizing principle. There are, thus plots of action plots of character and plots of thought. In the first, the synthesizing principle is a completed change gradual or sudden, in the situation of the protagonist, determined and effected by character and thought (as in *Oedipus* and *The Brothers Karamazov*), in the second, the principle is a completed process of change in the moral character of the protagonist precipitated or molded by action and made manifest both in it and in thought and feeling (as in James's *The Portrait of a Lady*) in the third, the principle is a completed process of change in the thought of the protagonist and consequently in his feelings conditioned and directed by character and action (as in Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*). All these types of construction, and not merely the first are plots in the meaning of our definition and it is mainly perhaps because most of the familiar classic plots including that of *Tom Jones* have been of the first kind that so many critics have tended to reduce plot to action alone.<sup>11</sup>

If this is granted we may go farther. For a plot in the enlarged sense here given to the term is not merely a particular synthesis of particular materials of character thought, and action but such a synthesis endowed necessarily because it imitates in words a sequence of human activities with a power to affect our opinions and emotions in a certain way. We are bound as we read or listen to form expectations about what is coming and to feel more or less determinate desires relatively to our expectations. At the very least if we are interested at all, we desire to know what is going to happen or how the problems faced by the characters are going to be solved. This is a necessary condition of our pleasure in all plots and there are many good ones—in the classics of pure detective fiction, for example, or in some modern psychiatric novels—the power of which depends almost exclusively on the pleasure we take in inferring progressively from complex or ambiguous signs the true state of affairs. For some readers and even some critics this would seem to be the chief source of delight in many plots that have obviously been constructed on more specific principles not only *Tom Jones*, as we have seen, but

<sup>8</sup> *Op cit* I 195

<sup>9</sup> Cross *op cit* II 159-61 Elton *op cit* I 195-96

<sup>10</sup> See above pp 44-47 and *Critics and Criticism* (original ed.) pp 588-92

<sup>11</sup> This accounts in large part I think for the depreciation of plot in E. M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* and for his notion of a rivalry between plot and character in which one or the other may triumph. For a view much closer to that argued in this essay see Elizabeth Bowen, *Notes on Writing a Novel* *Orion* II (1945) 18 ff.



*Oedipus* has been praised as a mystery story and it is likely that much of Henry James's popularity is due to his remarkable capacity for provoking a superior kind of inferential activity. What distinguishes all the more developed forms of imitative literature, however, is that though they presuppose this instinctive pleasure in learning, they go beyond it and give us plots of which the effects derive in a much more immediate way from the particular ethical qualities manifested in their agents' actions and thoughts vis-à-vis the human situations in which they are engaged. When this is the case we cannot help becoming in a greater or less degree emotionally involved for some of the characters we wish good, for others ill and depending on our inferences as to the events we feel hope or fear, pity or satisfaction, or some modification of these or similar emotions. The peculiar power of any plot of this kind as it unfolds, is a result of our state of knowledge at any point in complex interaction with our desires for the characters as morally differentiated beings and we may be said to have grasped the plot in the full artistic sense only when we have analyzed this interplay of desires and expectations sequentially in relation to the incidents by which it is produced.

It is of course an essential condition of such an effect that the writer should so have combined his elements of action, character and thought as to have achieved a complete and ordered whole with all the parts needed to carry the protagonist by probable or necessary stages from the beginning to the end of his change. We should not have, otherwise, any connected series of expectations wherewith to guide our desires. In itself, however, this structure is only the matter or content of the plot and not its form: the form of the plot—in the sense of that which makes its matter into a definite artistic thing—is rather its distinctive working or power as the form of the plot in tragedy for example is the capacity of its unified sequence of actions to effect through pity and fear a catharsis of such emotions.

But if this is granted then certain consequences follow for the criticism of dramas and novels. It is evident in the first place that no plot of this order can be judged excellent *merely* in terms of the unity of its action, the number and variety of its incidents, or the extent to which it produces suspense and surprise. These are but properties of its matter, and their achievement even to a high degree, in any particular plot does not inevitably mean that the emotional effect of the whole will not still be diffused or weak. They are therefore, necessary, but not sufficient, conditions of a good plot: the positive excellence of which depends upon the power of its peculiar synthesis of character, action and thought as inferable from the sequence of words, to move

our feelings powerfully and pleasurably in a certain definite way.

But this power, which constitutes the form of the plot, is obviously from an artistic point of view the most important virtue any drama or novel can have: it is that indeed which most sharply distinguishes works of imitation from all other kinds of literary productions. It follows consequently that the plot considered formally of any imitative work is, in relation to the work as a whole, not simply a means—a framework or mere mechanism—but rather the final end which everything in the work, if that is to be felt as a whole, must be made directly or indirectly to serve. For the critic therefore the form of the plot is a first principle which he must grasp as clearly as possible for any work he proposes to examine before he can deal adequately with the questions raised by its parts. This does not mean that we cannot derive other relevant principles of judgment from the general causes of pleasure operative in all artistic imitations, irrespective of the particular effect, serious or comic, that is aimed at in a given work. One of these is the imitative principle itself: the principle that we are in general more convinced and moved when things are rendered for us through probable signs than when they are given merely in statement, without illusion, after the fashion of a scenario.<sup>12</sup> Critical judgments valid enough if they are not taken absolutely may also be drawn from considerations of the general powers of language as a literary medium of the known potentialities or requirements of a given manner of representation (e.g. dramatic or narrative) and of the various conditions of suspense and surprise. We are not likely to feel strongly the emotional effect of a work in which the worse rather than the better alternatives among these different expedients are consistently chosen or chosen in crucial scenes. The same thing too can be said of works in which the thought however clearly serving an artistic use is generally uninteresting or stale or in which the characters of the agents though right enough in conception for the intended effect, are less than adequately done or fail to impress themselves upon our memory and imagination, or in which we perceive that the most has not been made of the possibilities implicit in the incidents. And there is also a kind of judgment distinct from any of these the object of which is not so much the traits of a work that follow from its general character as an imitative drama or novel as the qualities of intelligence and moral sensibility in its author which are reflected

<sup>12</sup> The meaning and force of this will be clear to anyone who has compared in detail the text of *The Ambassadors* with James's preliminary synopsis of the novel (*The Notebooks of Henry James* [New York 1947] pp. 372-415). See also the excellent remarks of Allen Tate apropos of *Madame Bovary*, in his *Techniques of Fiction* (*Forms of Modern Fiction* ed. William Van O'Connor [Minneapolis 1948] esp. pp. 37-45).



in his conception and handling of its subject and which warrant us in ascribing greatness seriousness or maturity to some products of art and in denying these values to others no matter how excellent, in a formal sense the latter may be

Such criticism of parts in the light of general principles is indispensable but it is no substitute for—and its conclusions affirmative as well as negative, have constantly to be checked by—the more specific kind of criticism of a work that takes the form of the plot as its starting point and then inquires how far and in what way its peculiar power is maximized by the writer's invention and development of episodes his step by step rendering of the characters of his people, his use and elaboration of thought, his handling of diction and imagery and his decisions as to the order, method, scale, and point of view of his representation

All this is implied I think in the general hypothesis about plot which I have been outlining here and which I now propose to illustrate further in a re-examination of the ever to be praised plot of *Tom Jones*

## II

It is necessary to look first at its matter and to begin by asking what is the unifying idea by which this is held together. Elementary as the question is, I have not read any answers to it that do not in one way or another, mistake one of the parts of Fielding's novel for the whole. Doubtless the most common formula is that which locates the essence of the story in the sustained concealment and final disclosure of Tom's parentage. It is pleasant writes Oliver Elton to consider *Tom Jones* as a puzzle and to see how well the plan works out. For others the most important unifying factor is the love affair of Tom and Sophia; for still others the conflict between Tom and Blifil; for others again the quasi-picaresque sequence of Tom's adventures with women and on the road. The novel it is true, would be quite different in its total effect if any of these four lines of action had been left out but no one of them so subsumes all the rest as to justify us in considering it, even on the level of material action, as the principle of the whole. A distinctive whole there is however, and I venture to say that it consists not in any mere combination of these parts but rather in the dynamic system of actions extending throughout the novel by which the divergent intentions and beliefs of a large number of persons of different characters and states of knowledge belonging to or somehow related to the neighboring families of the Allworthys and the Westerns are made to co-operate, with the assistance of Fortune, first to bring Tom into an incomplete and precarious union, founded on an affinity of nature in spite of a disparity of

status with Allworthy and Sophia then to separate him as completely as possible from them through actions that impel both of them one after the other to reverse their opinions of his character and then just as he seems about to fulfil the old prophecy that he was certainly born to be hanged to restore them unexpectedly to him in a more entire and stable union of both affection and fortune than he has known before

The unity of *Tom Jones* is contained in this formula, but only potentially and before we can properly discuss the plot as an artistic principle we must examine in some detail the intricate scheme of probabilities involving moral choices mistaken judgments and accidents of Fortune which binds its many parts together from the time we first see Tom in Allworthy's bed until we leave him calmly enjoying his double good luck at the end of Book XVIII

There are three major stages in the action the first of which constituting in relation to the other two stages a beginning is complete by chapter vii of Book V. The starting point of everything is Bridget's scheme to provide security for both herself and her illegitimate son by palming off Tom on Allworthy as a foundling with the intention however of ultimately informing her brother of the truth. The first part of the plan works beautifully the affection which the good man at once conceives for the child assures Tom of a proper home and up-bringing and suspicion is diverted from his mother by Allworthy's discovery of parents for him, first in Jenny Jones (who as Bridget's agent is in the secret) and then in Partridge (who is not) and by the consequent departure of both of these from the neighborhood. In the end too Bridget's second purpose is fulfilled but meanwhile she has put both parts of her scheme for Tom in jeopardy by her marriage (facilitated, again by Allworthy's penetration) with Captain Blifil. As a result no early disclosure of Tom's true parentage is possible and in addition the boy acquires a potential rival, in the younger Blifil for both the affection and the fortune of Allworthy. On the other hand although the intrigue against him begins immediately after the marriage, its only result at this stage thanks to the goodness of Allworthy and the obvious innocence of Tom is to make him thought of henceforth as the son of Partridge. This damages him in the eyes of the world but his status as protégé and heir along with young Blifil of the benevolent Allworthy is still secure and will remain secure so long as his protector has no reason to think him unworthy of his favor.

A second phase of the beginning opens in Book III with the emergence of moral character in the two half brothers. There are now so far as Tom is concerned two main problems. The first has to do with his relation to Allworthy, for whom by this

time he has come to feel as strong an affection as Allworthy has felt, and continues to feel for him. There can be no change on his part no matter what Allworthy does since his feelings are based not on any opinion of interest but on the instinctive love of one good nature for another and there can equally be no change on Allworthy's part that will lead to a separation between them unless something happens to convince him that Tom's nature is after all bad. That under certain circumstances Allworthy should be capable of such a verdict on Tom is made probable generally by the excessive confidence in his ability to judge of character which has led him long before to condemn Partridge and, particularly by his implicit and, in the face of Bridget's favoritism for Tom, even aggressive belief in the good intentions of young Blifil, as well as in the integrity of the learned men he has chosen in his wisdom as tutors for the two boys.

Occasions for passing judgment on Tom present themselves increasingly from his fourteenth year and Blifil, seconded by Thwackum and Square, misses no chance of using them to blacken his character in his guardian's eyes. The occasions are given by Tom's well-intentioned but quixotic and imprudently managed actions toward Black George and his family before and after his seduction by Molly. In the first series of these no harm, in spite of Blifil, is done, on the contrary as we are told Tom by his generosity has rather improved than injured the affection which Mr. Allworthy was inclined to entertain for him. And it is the same at first with the actions that culminate in Tom's mistaken confession that he is the father of Molly's child: angry as Allworthy is at Tom's incontinence he is no less pleased with the honour and honesty of his self-accusation and he begins to form in his mind the same opinion of this young fellow which we hope, our reader may have conceived: it is only later, after having pardoned him, that he is induced by the sophistry of Square to entertain his first bad impression concerning Jones. But even this is not fatal to Tom: he is assured again after his injury, though with a warning for the future, that what has happened is all forgiven and forgotten; he remains a beneficiary in proportion to his supposed status in Allworthy's will, and he is thought of by Allworthy, as we learn from the latter's speech in Book V, chapter vii, as one who has much goodness, generosity and honour in his temper and needs only prudence and religion to make him actually happy. Fortune is still, however, hesitatingly on the side of Tom.

The other problem concerns the attachment that has been developing meanwhile between Tom and Sophia. The basis of the attachment is again one of likeness of nature, and the function of the incidents in Books IV and V in which the two are thrown

together (Tom's intervention on behalf of Black George, his rescue of Sophia and his convalescence at her house, the affair of the muff, etc.) is simply to make credible its rapid progress, in spite of Tom's initial indifference and his entanglement with Molly, to the stage of mutual recognition reached in Book V, chapter vi. From this point on we need not expect any change in Tom's feelings toward Sophia, no matter what he may do in his character as gallant and there is an equally strong probability, in terms of her character, that Sophia will never cease to love Tom. She is for one thing a better judge of persons than Allworthy and is in no danger of being deceived, as he is, by the formal appearances of virtue in Blifil and of vice in Tom. To say the truth Sophia, when very young, discerned that Tom, though an idle, thoughtless, rattling rascal, was nobody's enemy but his own, and that Master Blifil, though a prudent, discreet, sober young gentleman, was at the same time strongly attached to the interest only of one single person. (IV, v)

She has moreover been even more completely aware than Allworthy of Tom's affair with Molly and yet, for all her hurt pride, she has not altered her opinion of his worth. Tom will have to behave, or appear to behave, much worse than this before she will decide to cast him off. In the meantime, however, their union is apparently condemned by circumstances to be one of affection only. Her father, though very fond of Tom, will not approve a marriage which offers so little prospect of fortune for his beloved daughter; she will not act counter to her father's wishes even though she will not agree to marry against her own feelings and as for Tom, though his life is now a constant struggle between honour and inclination, he can do nothing that will injure Sophia, show ingratitude to Western, or violate his more than filial piety toward Allworthy. The only possible resolution of their problem, it is plain, must be some event that will alter fundamentally Tom's position as a foundling.

Such an event is indeed impending at precisely this point in the action. For Bridget, dying, has just confided her secret to her attorney Dowling and has commanded him to carry the all-important message to Allworthy in fulfilment of the second part of her original design.

Blifil, however, aided by Fortune (which now turns temporarily against Tom), here intervenes with two important results immediately that a chain of happenings is set in motion constituting the middle of the plot which leads to the complete separation of Tom from both Allworthy and Sophia and, remotely, that, when Bridget's message is at last delivered in Book XVIII, the position to which Tom is then restored is made, by reason of the delay, one of even greater security and happiness than would

have been possible had his relationship to Allworthy become known at the time Bridget intended to reveal it

The action from the moment when Bridget gives Dowling her message to the moment many weeks later when Allworthy receives it falls into three main parts. The first begins with Allworthy's illness and ends with Tom's expulsion and Sophia's flight. The events in this stage form a single complex sequence in which Fortune conspires with the malice and ambition of Blifil, the pride and family tyranny of the Westerns, and the easily imposed on sense of justice of Allworthy first to thwart the purpose of Bridget and then to turn the indiscreet manifestations of Tom's love for Allworthy and joy at his recovery and of Sophia's love for Tom into occasions for the condemnation and banishment of Tom as an abandoned reprobate and for the persecution of Sophia as a recalcitrant daughter. The separating action of the novel thus comes to its first major climax with Tom now resolved, for the sake of Sophia, to renounce her and leave the country and with Sophia unable to endure the prospect of a marriage with Blifil determined to seek refuge in London with her cousin Lady Bellaston not without hopes of again seeing Tom. Blifil, now dearer than ever to Allworthy because of Tom's ill treatment of that good young man, has apparently triumphed though not completely since Sophia is still out of his grasp. In reality he has already made his fatal mistake, the mistake that will inevitably ruin him and restore Tom if and when Allworthy discovers it and in addition by driving Tom out he has made it more rather than less probable that the truth he has concealed will eventually come to light since, besides himself, it is also known in part or in whole, to three other persons—Partridge, Jenny Jones and Dowling—any or all of whom it is more likely now than before that Tom will meet.

This is in fact what happens during the next stage of the action, all the incidents of which converge on bringing Tom into contact first with Partridge then with Dowling and finally with Jenny (now Mrs. Waters). The first meeting leads to a kind of negative resolution. Tom now knows that he is not Partridge's son. From the meetings with the others who alone, save Blifil, know the whole truth, no resolution immediately follows, being prevented in both cases by the same causes that have determined Tom's fate hitherto: in the case of Jenny by Fortune which sees to it that there is no encounter between her and Partridge at Upton, in the case of Dowling, who is ready to sell his knowledge for a price by Tom's quixotic disinterestedness. The crucial discovery is thus postponed but when we consider that Tom is now known to Dowling and to Jenny (though to the latter not as Bridget's son)

and that both of these now become attached to persons in the Allworthy Western circle—Jenny to Sophia's cousin in law Fitzpatrick and Dowling to Blifil—it is clear that the probability of its eventually taking place and possibly in more auspicious circumstances is increased rather than diminished by what has occurred.

In the meantime with the happenings at Upton the complication has entered its last and longest and for Tom most distressing phase, the climax of which at the end of Book XVI is his receipt in prison of Sophia's letter of condemnation and dismissal. The principal villain is again Fortune which as we have been told (V x) seldom doth things by halves and which having already robbed Tom of the good will of Allworthy, now seems bent on completing his unhappiness by using his too complaisant good nature and his capacity for indiscretion to deprive him of Sophia and perhaps even of his life. It all begins with the chapter of accidents at the inn where because of his gallantry to Jenny Tom first has an angry encounter with Fitzpatrick (who is seeking his runaway wife) and then misses Sophia who departs at once on learning of his infidelity and makes her way in the company of Mrs. Fitzpatrick to London and Lady Bellaston. Some harm has now been done but not much as Tom learns when having pursued her to London he finally meets her again at Lady Bellaston's and is told in a tender scene that what has really disturbed her has not been so much his misconduct with Jenny which she can forgive as Partridge's free use of her name in public.

This happy resolution however comes too late for already although with the best intentions—namely of finding his way to Sophia—Tom has been seduced into the affair with Lady Bellaston which is his closest approach, in the novel to a base act. The affair does indeed lead him to Sophia but only by chance and then under circumstances which, while they do not betray him to Sophia, turn the wrath of his new mistress against her and lead to a fresh series of efforts to separate her from Tom. The first of these, the attempted rape by Lord Fellamar, is thwarted when Western, having learned of his daughter's whereabouts, rescues her in the nick of time and carries her away to his lodgings to face another course of family persecution and threats of imminent marriage to Blifil. It is on hearing of this that Tom, his thoughts now centered wholly on Sophia in spite of his despair of ever winning her, decides to break with Lady Bellaston and adopts the expedient for doing so without dishonor which nearly leads to his ruin. For the effect of his proposal of marriage is to draw the Lady's vengeful feelings upon himself and Sophia at once with the result that she arranges for his kidnapping by a press gang

at the same time that she makes sure Sophia will never marry him by sending her the letter of proposal as proof of his villainy. With Sophia her scheme succeeds so incapable of any other interpretation does the evidence seem. She is foiled, however, in her design against Tom, and once more by a delayed effect of the events at Upton. But the meeting which Fortune brings about with the still angry Fitzpatrick though it saves Tom from being pressed into the navy spares him only for what promises to be a worse fate.

The separating action has now come to its second major climax—much the more serious of the two for Tom, since he has not only lost Sophia as well as Allworthy but lost her, he thinks as a direct result of his own vice and folly. He can still, if Fitzpatrick dies, be separated from his life, but otherwise all the possibilities of harm to him contained in his original situation have been exhausted. Not however all the possibilities of good for the very same incidents proceeding from the affair at Upton which have so far been turned by Fortune against Tom have also had consequences which Fortune bent upon doing nothing by halves may yet exploit in his favor.

The most important of these in the long run is the moral change produced by his recent experiences in Tom himself, as manifested by his break with Lady Bellaston and by his rejection of the honorable advances of Mrs. Hunt and the dishonorable advances of Mrs. Fitzpatrick. It is not so much what he is however as what he is thought to be by Allworthy and Sophia that immediately counts and he has had the good luck by virtue of coming to London of acquiring in Mrs. Miller a character witness who knows the best as well as the worst of him and who will at least be listened to by her old friend and benefactor Allworthy and perhaps by Sophia. There is moreover as a result of what has happened, rather less danger than before that Sophia who in spite of her reason, still loves Tom will be forced to marry Blifil, for though she is again in the power of her family, the machinations of Lady Bellaston have led to a conflict between the two Westerns over the rival merits of Blifil and Lord Fellamar. Time has thus been gained for Tom, and meanwhile Allworthy and Blifil have come up to town in response to Western's summons and have taken lodgings with Mrs. Miller. Dowling has come too, and so also has Jenny now living with Fitzpatrick in lieu of the wife he has been seeking since Upton and whose whereabouts he has just learned. All those in short, who know Bridget's secret—and Blifil's villainy in suppressing it at the time of her death—are now assembled for the first time in close proximity to Allworthy. And then Blifil made overconfident by his success and believing Fitzpatrick about to die of his wound decides to use the opportunity afforded

by the presence of Lord Fellamar's press gang at the duel to strike one last blow at Tom.

But this time all the acts of Fortune work to the advantage of our hero and the resolution moves rapidly to its end first by the reunion of Tom with Allworthy and then by his reunion with Sophia. The first requires a reversal of Allworthy's judgment of Tom's character and actions at the time of his banishment. This is prepared by Mrs. Miller's insistence upon his present goodness and the services he has rendered her family, but the decisive event is the letter from the dying and repentant Square, which sets in a new light Tom's acts during Allworthy's illness although without clearly implicating Blifil. The result is to restore Tom to his foster father's affections more or less on the footing which he had at the beginning of Book V but with the added circumstance that he has since suffered unjust persecution. The new Tom is not yet fully known, or the entire extent and cause of the injuries that have been done him. Mrs. Miller indeed suspects, but the blindness of Allworthy prevents a discovery and it requires a second intervention of Fortune aided by the rashness of Blifil to bring the revelation about. For not only does Blifil think Fitzpatrick's wound more serious than it is but in his zeal to gather all possible evidence damaging to Tom he has made it inevitable that Jenny will come to know who Tom is that she will at once go to Allworthy with her story that Dowling will then be questioned, and that he seeing where his profit now lies will tell the truth about the suppression of Bridget's dying message. Thus here again Fortune has done nothing by halves with the result that the exclusive place which Blifil has all along sought for himself in Allworthy's fortune and favor is now, with his unmasking and subsequent banishment properly accorded to Tom. In relation to the original conditions of the action moreover the reversal is equally complete. Bridget's intended disclosure of her secret has at last been made and with it both of her mistakes—of concealing Tom's parentage and then of marrying the elder Blifil—are finally canceled out.

The reunion with Sophia is likewise prepared by Mrs. Miller who is able to convince her that Tom's letter proposing marriage to Lady Bellaston was at worst an indiscretion. But though Allworthy also intervenes on his nephew's behalf and though Western is now as violent an advocate for Tom as he has earlier been for Blifil the resolution comes only when Sophia faced with the repentant young man finds once more (as after his previous affairs with Molly and Jenny) that her love for him is stronger than her injured pride and that it is now a pleasure to be able to obey her father's commands.

It is in nothing short of this total system of actions

moving by probable or necessary connections from beginning through middle to end that the unity of the plot of *Tom Jones* is to be found. It is the unity clearly, of a complex plot, built on two continuous but contrary lines of probability both stemming from the double scheme of Bridget respecting Tom and from her marriage with Captain Blifil and both reinforced, from Book III onward by the combination in Tom's character of goodness and indiscretion the one producing immediately throughout the complication ever more bad fortune and distress for Tom the other at the same time preparing for him the good luck he finally comes to enjoy after the discovery and reversal in Book XVIII. It is no wonder that this plot, in which so many incidents involving so many surprising turns are all subsumed so brilliantly under one principle of action, should have been praised by all those critics from the eighteenth century to the present who have had a taste for intricate and ingenious constructions of this kind.

If the plot of *Tom Jones* is still to be praised however it ought to be for reasons more relevant than these to the special artistic quality of the novel we continue to read. For what has just been outlined as the plot is obviously something from which if we had never read the work itself, we could hardly predict with any assurance how Fielding's master-piece as composed for readers in a particularized sequence of words paragraphs chapters and books would be likely to affect our opinions and feelings. It is therefore not the plot proper of this novel but at most its necessary substrate of unified and probable action and, if we are to say what the plot proper is and be able to use our account for critical purposes we must go beyond the material system of happenings—however intrinsically admirable this may be in its ordered magnitude—and look for the formal principle which makes of this system a definitely effective whole and which actually operates in so far as we concentrate closely on the text to direct our emotionalized expectations for Tom and the others and our subsequent responses when the hoped-for or feared events occur.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The distinction can also be stated in terms of the decisions Fielding had to make in writing the novel. It would obviously not have been the novel it is had he not conceived at some stage of the process of construction the particular system of actions I have sketched above but on the other hand the conception merely of this intricate scheme of incidents would have been insufficient to allow him to proceed securely in the writing without a further decision or complex of decisions as to the precise nature of the over-all effect among several more or less distinct possibilities he wished his story to have on its readers. The plot proper of *Tom Jones* is thus not its system of actions alone but this system so qualified with respect to its working or power as to determine specifically rather than generally the successive artistic problems which Fielding faced in putting it into words. It is only in this sense that we can speak intelligently or usefully of plot as a constructive first principle in *Tom Jones* or in any other imitative novel or drama.

I should add that several of my friends while willing to accept the foregoing analysis would prefer that I should use some other

### III

In stating this principle for any plot we must consider three things (1) the general estimate we are induced to form by signs in the work of the moral character and deserts of the hero as a result of which we tend more or less ardently to wish for him either good or bad fortune in the end (2) the judgments we are led similarly to make about the nature of the events that actually befall the hero or seem likely to befall him as having either painful or pleasurable consequences for him and this in greater or less degree and permanently or temporarily and (3) the opinions we are made to entertain concerning the degree and kind of his responsibility for what happens to him, as being either little or great and if the latter, the result either of his acting in full knowledge of what he is doing or of some sort of mistake. The form of a given plot is a function of the particular correlation among these three variables which the completed work is calculated to establish consistently and progressively in our minds and in these terms we may say that the plot of *Tom Jones* has a pervasively comic form. The precise sense however in which the form is comic is a rather special one, which needs to be carefully defined.

To begin with it is obviously a plot in which the complication generates much pain and inner suffering for the hero, as a result of misfortunes which would seem genuinely serious to any good person. He is schemed against by a villain who will not stop even at judicial murder to secure his ends and what is worse in his eyes he loses the good will of the two people whom he most loves, and loses it as a consequence not simply of the machinations of his enemies but of his own mistaken acts. From near the beginning until close to the end moreover, he is made to undergo an almost continuous series of distressing indignities to be insulted on the score of his birth to be forbidden the sight of Sophia to see her being pushed into a hated marriage with Blifil and persecuted when she refuses to be banished abruptly from home to be reduced to poverty and forced to take money from Lady Bellaston, to be laid in wait for by a press gang, to be compelled to run a man through in self-defense, and finally in prison to be faced with the prospect of a disgraceful death.

The hero furthermore to whom all this happens is a naturally good man—not notably virtuous but for all his faults, at least the equal of ourselves and of any other character in the novel in disinterestedness, generosity, and tender benevolent feeling. These traits are impressed upon us in the third book and are never obscured even in the worst of Tom's trou-

word than plot to designate the formal principle I have been attempting to define. I am inclined to agree with them and only wish that they or I could think of a better term.

bles in London they are, in fact, revived for us just at the point when we might be most tempted to forget them by the episodes of Anderson and of Miss Miller's daughter. We favor Tom therefore, even if we do not admire him, and we wish for him the good fortune with Allworthy and Sophia which he properly wishes for himself and which in terms of his basic moral character, he deserves to get. We follow him through his troubles and distresses, consequently, with a desire that he will eventually be delivered from them and reunited to his friend and mistress and this all the more when, at the climax of his difficulties, we see him acting, for the first time, in a way we can entirely approve, in the end when our wishes for him are unexpectedly realized, and to a fuller degree than we had anticipated we feel some of the satisfaction which Fielding says (XVIII xiii) was then felt by the principal characters themselves. All were happy but those the most who had been most unhappy before. Their former sufferings and fears gave such a relish to their felicity as even love and fortune in their fullest flow could not have given without the advantage of such a comparison.

Having conceived a plot in which so sympathetic a character is subjected in the complication to experiences so painful it would have been relatively easy for Fielding to write a novel similar in form to his *Amelia* that is to say, a tragicomedy of common life designed to arouse and then to dissipate by a sudden happy resolution emotions of fear and pity for his hero and of indignation toward his enemies. There is, indeed, an even greater material basis for such an effect in *Tom Jones* than in the later novel: the evils that threaten Tom and the indignities he undergoes are, in the abstract, more serious than anything Booth has to fear, and the same thing is true of the persecutions endured by Sophia as compared with those which *Amelia* is made to suffer. And yet nothing is more evident than that whereas the emotions awakened in us by the distresses of Booth and *Amelia* are the graver emotions of anxiety and compassion that yield what Fielding calls the pleasure of tenderness,<sup>14</sup> our feelings for Tom and Sophia, as we anticipate or view in actuality the greater evils that befall them prior to the final discovery, partake only in the mildest degree of this painful quality. We do not actively fear for or pity either of them and our indignation at the actions of their enemies—even the actions of Blifil—never develops into a sustained punitive response.

Nor is the reason for this hard to find. It is generally the case that whatever tends to minimize our fear in a plot that involves threats of undesired misfortune for the sympathetic characters tends also to minimize our pity when the misfortune occurs

and likewise our indignation against the doers of the evil and fear for Tom and Sophia as they move toward the successive climaxes of their troubles is prevented from becoming a predominant emotion in the complication of *Tom Jones* chiefly by two things.<sup>15</sup>

The first is our perception which in each case grows stronger as the novel proceeds, that the persons whose actions threaten serious consequences for the hero and heroine are all persons for whom, though in varying degrees we are bound to feel a certain contempt. The most formidable of them all is of course Blifil. As a villain however, he is no Iago but merely a clever opportunist who is likely to overreach himself (as the failure of his first schemes shows) and whose power of harm depends entirely on the blindness of Allworthy: he deceives Tom only temporarily and Sophia and Mrs. Miller not at all and after we have seen the display of his personal ineptitude in the proposal scene with Sophia, we are prepared to wait without too much active suspense for his final showing-up. Blifil is too coldly selfish, perhaps to strike us as positively ridiculous but in the characters of the other agents of misfortune the comic strain is clear. It is most obvious needless to say in Squire Western and his sister who can really fear that the persecutions directed against the determined and resourceful Sophia by such a blundering pair of tyrants can ever issue in serious harm? For Allworthy too in spite of his excellent principles, it is hard for us to maintain entire respect: we should certainly take more seriously his condemnation of Tom in Book VI had we not become accustomed as a result of earlier incidents in the novel to smile at a man who could believe in the goodness of the two Blifils and whose pride in his own judgment could make him dispose so precipitously of Jenny and Partridge. There are evident comic traits also in all the persons who cause trouble for Tom and Sophia in the later part of the action: in Dowling the man always in a hurry; in Lady Bellaston the great dame who pursues a plebeian with frenzied letters and nocturnal visits to his lodgings; in Lord Fellamar the half-hearted rake; in Fitzpatrick the unfaithful but jealous husband who will not believe the evidence of his own eyes. In respect of her relations with Tom, though not otherwise Sophia, too must be added to the list as a virtuous girl with a proper amount of spirit (not to say vanity) whose good resolutions against Tom never survive for long in the presence of her lover. These are all manifestations of the ineffectual or ridiculous in a plot in

<sup>15</sup> I confine myself here to devices in some sense implicit in the plot itself as distinguished from devices serving the same purpose which involve Fielding's manner of representation: on the latter see Section IV below. A full solution of the problem would also have to take into account as one of my friends reminds me such things as the choice of names for the characters and the general nonserious expectations suggested by the title of the work.

<sup>14</sup> *Amelia* Book III chap. 1.



which the impending events are materially painful and they contribute on the principle that we fear less or not at all when the agents of harm to a hero are more or less laughable persons to induce in us a general feeling of confidence that matters are not really as serious as they appear

A second ground of security lies in the nature of the probabilities for future action that are made evident progressively as the novel unfolds. From the beginning until the final capitulation of Sophia, the successive incidents constantly bring forth new and unexpected complications each seemingly fraught with more suffering for Tom than the last, but as we read we instinctively infer from past occurrences to what will probably happen next or in the end and what steadily cumulates in this way in spite of the gradual worsening of Tom's situation is an opinion that since nothing irreparable has so far happened to him nothing ever will. In one sense—that which relates to its material events—the action becomes more and more serious as it moves to its climax in another sense—that which relates to our expectations—less and less serious and I think that any close reader who keeps in mind the earlier parts of the novel as he attends to the later is inevitably made aware of this with the result that though his interest mounts his fear increasingly declines. We come thus to the first climax in Book VI recalling such things as Jenny's assurance to Allworthy that she will someday make known the whole truth the sudden reversal of the elder Blifil's sinister plans the collapse, after initial success, of young Blifil's first scheme against Tom and Tom's return to favor with Allworthy after the incident of Molly's arrest and all these memories inevitably operate to check the rise of any long-range apprehensions. And it is the same too, with the second and apparently much more serious climax at the end of Book XVI, when Tom dismissed by Sophia lies in prison awaiting the death of Fitzpatrick, who has been given up by his surgeon we cannot but remember how in the affairs of Molly and then of Mrs. Waters Sophia has more than once demonstrated her inability to inflict any great or prolonged punishment on Tom for his sins with other women and how on the occasion of Allworthy's illness in Book V the outcome had completely disappointed the gloomy predictions of the doctor.

The attenuation in these ways of fear pity, and indignation is a necessary condition of the peculiar comic pleasure which is the form of the plot in *Tom Jones* but it is only a negative and hence not a sufficient condition. A comic effect of any kind would be impossible if we took Tom's increasingly bad prospects with the same seriousness as he himself takes them, but what in a positive sense makes Fielding's plot comic is the combination of this feeling of se-

curity with our perception of the decisive role which Tom's own blunders are made to play consistently in the genesis of all the major difficulties into which he is successively brought—always of course with the eager assistance of Fortune and of the malice or misunderstanding of others. The importance of this becomes clear when we consider how much trouble he would have spared himself had he not mistaken his seduction by Molly for a seduction of her by him had he not got drunk when he learned of Allworthy's recovery or fought with Blifil and Thwackum had he not suggested to Western that he be allowed to plead Blifil's case with Sophia had he not allowed himself to be seduced by Jenny at Upton, had he not thought that his very love for Sophia, to say nothing of his gallantry, required him to keep well with the lady at the masquerade and lastly had he not accepted so uncritically Nightingale's scheme for compelling her to break off the affair.

The truth is that each successive stage of the plot up to the beginning of the denouement in Book XVII is precipitated by a fresh act of imprudence or indiscretion on the part of Tom for which he is sooner or later made to suffer not only in his fortune but his feelings until in the resolution of each sequence he discovers that the consequences of his folly are after all not so serious as he has feared. This characteristic pattern emerges even before the start of the complication proper in the episode of Tom's relations with Molly and Sophia in Book IV and the first part of Book V it dominates the prolonged suspense of his relations with Allworthy from the time of the latter's illness to the final discovery and it determines the course of his troubles with Sophia from Upton to the meeting in London and from the ill conceived proposal scheme to her sudden surrender at the end.

The comic pleasure all this gives us is certainly not of the same kind as that produced by such classic comic plots as (say) Ben Jonson's *The Silent Woman* or to take a more extreme instance of the type his *Volpone*, in which a morally despicable person is made by reason of his own folly or lapse from cleverness to suffer a humiliating and, to him though not to others painful reversal of fortune. The comedy of Blifil is indeed of this simple punitive kind,<sup>16</sup> but our suspense concerning Blifil is only in a secondary way determinative of the effect of Fielding's novel and the comedy of Tom and hence of the plot as a whole is of a different sort. It is not simple comedy but mixed the peculiar power of which depends upon the fact that the mistaken acts of the hero which principally excite our amusement are the acts of a man for whom throughout the plot we entertain sympathetic feelings because of the general

<sup>16</sup> I borrow this term from Elder Olson's *An Outline of Poetic Theory* (see above p. 12).



goodness of his character we do not want, therefore, to see him suffer any permanent indignity or humiliation, and we never cease to wish good fortune for him. This favorable attitude, moreover, is not contradicted by anything in the acts themselves from which his trouble springs. We perceive that in successive situations, involving threats to his fortune or peace of mind, he invariably does some imprudent or foolish thing which cannot fail, the circumstances being what in our superior knowledge we see them to be, to result for him in painful embarrassment and regret. But we realize that his blunders arise from no permanent weakness of character but are merely the natural errors of judgment easily corrigible in the future, of an inexperienced and too impulsively generous and gallant young man. We look forward to the probable consequences of his indiscretions, therefore, with a certain anticipatory reluctance and apprehension—a kind of faint alarm which is the comic analogue of fear. It is some such feeling, I think that we experience if only momentarily when Tom gets drunk and goes into the wood with Molly and when, much later, he sends his proposal letter to Lady Bellaston. We know that trouble more trouble than the young man either foresees or deserves is in store for him as a result of what he has done, and since, foolish as he is, we favor him against his enemies, the expectation of his inevitable suffering cannot be purely and simply pleasant.

And yet the expectation is never really painful in any positive degree and it is kept from becoming so by our counter expectation established by the devices I have mentioned that however acute may be Tom's consequent sufferings, his mistakes will not issue in any permanent frustration of our wishes for his good. In this security that no genuine harm has been done we can view his present distresses—as when he anguishes over the wrong he thinks he has done to Molly, or finds Sophia's muff in his bed at Upton, or receives her letter—as the deserved consequences of erroneous actions for which any good man would naturally feel embarrassment or shame. We do not therefore pity him in these moments, for all his self-accusations and cries of despair, but rather laugh at him as a man who has behaved ridiculously or beneath himself and is now being properly punished. And our comic pleasure continues into the subsequent resolving scenes—the discovery of Molly in bed with Square, the meeting with Sophia in London, and the final anticlimax of her agreement to marry him the next morning—when it appears that Tom has after all worried himself over much, for we now see that he has been doubly ridiculous, at first in not taking his situation seriously enough and then in taking it more seriously than he should. But Tom is a good man, and we expect him to get better and so our amused reaction to his

sufferings lacks entirely the punitive quality that characterizes comedy of the Jonsonian type. If the anticipatory emotion is a mild shudder of apprehension, the climactic emotion—the comic analogue of pity—is a kind of friendly mirth at his expense (poor Tom we say to ourselves), which easily modulates in the happy denouement into unsentimental rejoicing at his not entirely deserved good fortune.

This however is not quite all, for not only does Tom's final good fortune seem to us at least partly undeserved in terms of his own behavior, but we realize, when we look back from the end upon the long course of the action that he has, in truth, needed all the luck that has been his. Again and again he has been on the verge of genuinely serious disaster and though we expect him to survive and hence do not fear for him in prospect, we perceive at the resolution of each of his major predicaments that there has been something of a hairs breadth quality in his escape. The cards have indeed been stacked against him from the beginning to the ultimate discovery he has been a young man whose lack of security and imprudence more than offset his natural goodness living in a world in which the majority of people are ill-natured and selfish, and some of them actively malicious and in which the few good persons are easily imposed upon by appearances. It is against this background of the potentially serious—more than ever prominent in the London scenes—that the story of Tom's repeated indiscretions is made to unfold, with the result that, though the pleasure remains consistently comic, its quality is never quite that of the merely amiable comedy based likewise upon the blunders of sympathetic protagonists of such works as *She Stoops To Conquer* or *The Rivals*. We are not disposed to feel when we are done laughing at Tom that all is right with the world or that we can count on Fortune always intervening in the same gratifying way, on behalf of the good.

#### IV

This or something very close to this, I think, is the intended working or power of *Tom Jones* and the primary question for the critic concerns the extent to which Fielding's handling of the constituent parts of the novel is calculated to sustain and maximize this special pleasure which is its form.

It must be said that he sometimes fails. There are no perfect works of art, and, though many of the faults that have been found in *Tom Jones* are faults only on the supposition that it should have been another kind of novel, still enough real shortcomings remain to keep one's enthusiasm for Fielding's achievement within reasonable bounds. There are not infrequent *longueurs* notably in the Man of the

Hill's story (whatever positive values this may have), in Mrs Fitzpatrick's narrative to Sophia (useful as this is in itself) in the episode of Tom's encounter with the gypsies and in the final complications of the Nightingale affair. With the best will in the world too, it is impossible not to be shocked by Tom's acceptance of fifty pounds from Lady Belaston on the night of his first meeting with her at the masquerade and his subsequent emergence as one of the best dressed men about town. It is necessary, no doubt that he should now fall lower than ever before but surely not so low as to make it hard for us to infer his act from our previous knowledge of his character and of the rather modest limits hitherto of his financial need, for the moment at least, a different Tom is before our eyes. And there are also more general faults. The narrator for one thing though it is well that he should intrude perhaps intrudes too much in a purely ornamental way the introductory essays thus, while we should not like to lose them from the canon of Fielding's writings, serve only occasionally the function of chorus, and the returns from them, even as embellishment begin to diminish before the end. What chiefly strikes the modern reader however is the extent of Fielding's reliance, in the novel as a whole on techniques of narrative now largely abandoned by novelists who have learned their art since the middle of the nineteenth century. It could be shown I think, that as compared with most of his predecessors the author of *Tom Jones* had moved a long way in the direction of the imitative and dramatic. Yet it cannot be denied that in many chapters where he might better have rendered he merely states and that even in the most successful of the scenes in which action and dialogue predominate he leaves far less to inference than we are disposed to like.<sup>17</sup>

Despite all this, however there are not many novels of comparable length in which the various parts are conceived and developed with a shrewder eye to what is required for a maximum realization of the form.<sup>18</sup> A few examples of this will have to serve and it is natural to start with the manner in which Fielding handles the incidents that follow directly from Tom's mistakes. The pattern of all of these is much the same. Tom first commits an indiscretion which is then discovered, and the discovery results in his immediate or eventual embarrassment. Now it is clear that the comic pleasure will be enhanced in proportion as in each incident, the discovery is made unexpectedly and by precisely those persons whose knowledge of what Tom has done will be most damaging to him and by as many

of these as possible so that the consequences for him are not simple but compounded. Fielding understood this well and the effects of his understanding are repeatedly evident in *Tom Jones* from Book IV to the end of the complication. Consider for example how he manages the discovery of Tom's original entanglement with Molly. It is necessary of course, when Molly is arrested after the fight in the churchyard that Tom should at once rush to Allworthy with his mistaken confession, but it is not necessary—only highly desirable—that he should intervene in the fight himself as Molly's champion that Blifil and Square should be with him at the time, that the news of the arrest should reach him while he is dining with Western and Sophia whose charm he is just beginning to perceive and that when he leaves in a hurry the Squire should joke with his daughter about what he suspects. Or again there is the even more complicated and comically disastrous sequence that begins with Tom's drunkenness after Allworthy's recovery. This in itself is ridiculous since we know the illness has never been serious, but observe how the succeeding embarrassments are made to pile up. Tom's hilarious joy leading to his fight with Blifil this to his retirement to the grove, his romantic meditation on Sophia and his surrender to Molly this to the discovery of his new folly by Blifil and Thwackum, this to the second fight much bloodier than the first and this in turn, when the Westerns unexpectedly appear on the scene, to Sophia's fresh discovery of Tom's wildness and, what is much more serious to the misconstruction of her fainting fit by her aunt with results that lead presently to the proposal of a match with Blifil the foolish intervention of Tom, the discovery by Western of the true state of affairs, his angry appeal to Allworthy Blifil's distorted version of what has happened, Tom's expulsion from home and Sophia's imprisonment. All this is probable enough but there is something of the comically wonderful in the educing of so many appropriately extreme consequences from a cause in itself so apparently innocent and trivial. And the same art of making the most out of incidents for the sake of the comic suspense of the plot can be seen at work through the rest of the novel in the great episode at Upton for example, where all the happenings are contrived to produce, immediately or remotely a maximum of pseudo serious suffering for Tom and also in the various later scenes in which the discovery to Sophia of Tom's intrigue with her cousin is first narrowly averted, with much embarrassment to him, and then finally made under circumstances that could hardly be worse for the young man. A less accomplished artist seeking to achieve the same general effect through his plot would certainly have missed many of these opportunities.

A less accomplished artist again, would never

<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the chief exception to this in its relatively large use of intimation is the scene of Tom's conversation with Dowling in Book XII chap. x.

<sup>18</sup> I am indebted for several points in what follows to an unpublished essay by one of my students Mr. Melvin Seiden.

have been able to invent or sustain characters so good for the form as well as so interesting in themselves, as the two Westerns and Partridge. We need not dwell on the multiple uses to which these great humourists are put: it is more important since the point has been less often discussed or discussed in part to Fielding's disadvantage to consider what merits can be found in his handling of the other characters such as Tom himself, Allworthy, Sophia and Blifil who are intended to seem morally sympathetic or antipathetic to us and comically inferior only by virtue of their erroneous acts. With the exception of Sophia who is made charming and lively enough to constitute in herself good fortune for Tom they are not endowed with any notably particularized traits, and the question for criticism is whether given the comic form of the novel as a whole, any more lifelike doing would not have entailed a departure from the mean which this imposed. I think the answer is clear for Blifil: he must be made to seem sufficiently formidable in the short run to arouse comic apprehension for Tom but not so formidable as to excite in us active or prolonged feelings of indignation and any further individualizing of him than we get would almost certainly have upset this balance to the detriment of the whole. The answer is clear also I think, for Tom. We must consistently favor him against his enemies and think it probable that he should suffer acute embarrassment and remorse when he discovers the consequences of his mistakes but on the other hand, any appreciably greater particularizing of his sympathetic traits than is attempted would inevitably have made it difficult for us not to feel his predicaments as seriously as he does himself and that would have been an error: it is not the least happy of Fielding's inventions for example that he repeatedly depicts Tom especially when he is talking to Sophia or thinking about her in terms of the clichés of heroic romance. There remains Allworthy and concerning him the chief doubt arises from a consideration of the important part he is given along with Sophia, in the definition of Tom's final good fortune. For the purposes of the comic complication it is sufficient that we should see him acting in the character of a severely just magistrate who constantly administers injustice through too great trust in his knowledge of men: it is not for this however, but for his amiability that Tom loves him and cherishes his company in the end yet of Allworthy's actual possession of that quality we are given few clear signs.

A whole essay finally, could be written on the masterly way in which Fielding exploited the various devices implicit in his third person historical mode of narration in the service of his comic form. Broadly speaking, his problem was twofold: first, to establish

and maintain in the reader a general frame of mind appropriate to the emotional quality of the story as a whole and, second, to make sure that the feelings aroused by his characters at particular moments or stages of the action were kept in proper alignment with the intended overall effect.

That the first problem is adequately solved there can be little doubt long before we come to the incidents in which Tom's happiness is put in jeopardy by his own blunders and the malice of Blifil, we have been prepared to expect much unmerited calamity and distress for him, and at the same time to view the prospect without alarm. Our security would doubtless have been less had not Fielding chosen to represent at length the events contained in Books I and II with the vivid impressions they give of the fallibility of Allworthy on the one hand and of the impotence for permanent harm of the elder Blifil on the other: we cannot but look forward to a repetition of this pattern in the later parts of the novel. This is less important however, as a determinant of our frame of mind than the guidance given us by the clearly evident attitude of Fielding's narrator. He is we perceive, a man we can trust, who knows the whole story and still is not deeply concerned: one who understands the difference between good men and bad and who can yet speak with amused indulgence of the first, knowing how prone they are to weakness of intellect and with urbane scorn, rather than indignation, of the second knowing that most of them, too are fools. This combination of sympathetic moral feeling with ironical detachment is bound to influence our expectations from the first, and to the extent that it does so we tend to anticipate the coming troubles with no more than comic fear.

It is when the troubles come, in Book V and later that Fielding's second problem emerges, for, given the kinds of things that then happen to Tom and especially the seriousness with which as a good man he necessarily takes them there is always a danger that our original comic detachment may give way, temporarily, to tragicomic feelings of fear, pity, and indignation. That this seldom happens is another sign of how successfully, in *Tom Jones* the handling of the parts is kept consonant with the formal demands of the whole. It is a question primarily of maximizing the general comic expectations of the reader by minimizing the possible non-comic elements in his inferences about particular situations and the devices which Fielding uses for the purpose are of several kinds. Sometimes the result is achieved by preventing our attention from concentrating long or closely on potential causes of distress for Tom, it is notable, for example, that we are given no representation of Blifil scheming Tom's ruin before his speech to Allworthy in Book VI, chapter xi, and that from this

point until Book XVI Blifil and his intentions are not again brought to the fore. Sometimes the device consists in slurring over a painful scene by generalized narration and then quickly diverting us to an obviously comic sequence in another line of action: this is what Fielding does to excellent effect with the incident of Tom's condemnation and banishment; we should feel much more keenly for him if, in the first place we were allowed to hear more of his talk with Allworthy and in the second place were not plunged so soon after into the ridiculous quarrels of the Westons. Or again the expedient may take the simple form of a refusal by the narrator to describe feelings of Tom which if they were represented directly and at length might easily excite a non-comic response as in the accounts of his madness at Upton after he finds Sophia's muff and of the torments he endures (such that even Thwackum would almost have pitied him) when her message of dismissal comes to him in prison. And the same general minimizing function is also served by the two episodes in the middle part of the novel which have occasioned so much discussion among critics. Both the story told to Tom by the Man of the Hill and that recounted to Sophia by Mrs Fitzpatrick however much they owe to the convention of interpolated narratives which Fielding had inherited along with other devices from the earlier writers of comic romance are clearly designed as negative analogies to the moral state of the listeners from which the reader is led to infer on the eve of the most distressing part of the complication for the hero and heroine, that nothing that may happen to them will be in comparison very bad.

The controlling influence of the form can be seen in all these expedients and it is no less apparent in Fielding's handling of the intrigue upon which the action of the novel ultimately depends—Bridget's affair with Summer her scheme of temporary concealment and eventual disclosure of Tom's parentage and the frustration of the second of these intentions until the denouement, by Blifil. Without this series of events and the consequences they entail in the opinions and acts of the characters the plot as we have it could not have existed but there was nothing in the nature of the events themselves to prescribe the particular manner in which they must be brought before the reader. At least two alternative modes of procedure were open to Fielding besides the one he actually chose. He could on the one hand have let the reader into the secret, either from the beginning or at the point in Book V where Bridget's dying message is brought by Dowling in the former case a brief statement by the narrator would have been sufficient (since he plainly knows the facts) in the latter case a brief report for which there are precedents elsewhere in the novel, of

Blifil's thoughts. Or on the other hand he could have contrived to keep our curiosity regarding the mystery more continuously and actively awake especially in the long stretches of the story between Book III and the final scenes in London: this need not again have required any invention of new incidents but only manipulations of the narrative discourse such as an explicit direction of the reader's mind to the circumstance that Dowling brought a letter from Bridget as well as the news of her death a hint that Blifil now had some new and surprising information about Tom and an occasional reminder thereafter that the full truth concerning Tom's birth was still to be learned and that it might, when known have important bearings, for good or possibly for ill upon his fortunes.

Given however, the form which Fielding according to our hypothesis, was attempting to impose on the materials of his plot with its distinctive line of serio-comic expectations and desires either of these two courses would clearly have been incorrect. The second would have injected into the middle sections of the narrative a competing principle of suspense diverting our attention unduly from the question of what is likely to befall Tom as a result of his mistakes to the question of who he is: the novel would then have become in fact the mystery story which, on a partial and erroneous view it has sometimes been taken to be. And the consequences of the other course would have been equally, perhaps more disruptive. For the complication in that case would have become, in large part the story of a completely foreseen and wished for discovery repeatedly deferred with the result on the one hand, that our complacency about the eventual outcome would have been increased to such a degree as sensibly to lessen our comic fear and hence our comic mirth in the successive anticlimactic reversals and on the other hand that our preoccupation with the comic aspects of Tom's well intentioned blunderings would have tended to give way excessively to a concern with the original injustice done him by Bridget and with the villainy of Blifil. A mean between emphasis on the existence of a mystery and full revelation of the secret to the reader was therefore indicated as the right technique and it was his perception of this that guided Fielding's procedure both in Books I and II, where the question of Tom's parentage is formally inquired into by Allworthy and settled to his own satisfaction and in Books V and VII where the question is reopened, in intent but not in result first by the confession of Bridget and then by the advances of Dowling to Tom. Something close to the proper mean is achieved by concentrating the narrative in the opening books on the objective acts and declarations of Bridget Jenny and Partridge subsequent to the finding of Tom in Allworthy's bed and

representing these by signs sufficiently ambiguous so that, although we discount the inferences drawn by Allworthy from the behavior of the two supposed parents we are yet given no adequate premises from which to reason to any particular alternative explanation. We surmise that one will ultimately be forthcoming, but in the meantime we are easily persuaded by the narrator to suspend our curiosity, especially since we perceive that neither of Allworthys discoveries will make any difference in his treatment of Tom. We are predisposed therefore to yield our attention to the events recounted in the middle books of the novel without active speculation concerning their remoter causes or growing impatience for further disclosures. Ambiguous disclosures do indeed continue to be made. There is the pervasive irony (in the world of this novel) of a young man assumed by nearly everyone in his circle including himself to be base-born who yet manifests all the signs, in appearance and sensibility, of being a gentleman and is regularly taken as one by strangers until they learn his story, and there are also the more specific clues to the real state of affairs afforded by Bridget's increasing preference for Tom as he grows up, the suddenly intensified animosity of Blifil toward the foundling after he learns the content of Bridget's message, Partridge's disavowal of the role in which he has been cast as Tom's father and, most pointed of all, Dowling's sly reference to "you uncle" in the interview which he forces on Tom in Book XII. But though hints of the truth are thus given in the events themselves, it is only in retrospect, at the moment of the discovery scene in Book XVIII, that we grasp their cumulative import, so effectively, in the narrator's discourse up to the very eve of this scene, has the question of who Tom is been kept subordinate to the question, upon which the main comic effect depends, of what will immediately follow from his imprudent acts.

## v

These are only a few of the things that can be said, in the light of our general hypothesis about plot, concerning the plot of *Tom Jones* and the relation to it of the other parts of the novel. I have given no consideration, thus, either to the functions served by the minor characters and by the many passages of extra-dramatic thought in defining the moral quality of the world in which the action takes place, or to the formal purposes governing Fielding's highly selective use of dialogue, or to the manner in which the diction and imagery of the narrative parts help to hold our responses to the right comic line even when the incidents themselves seem most serious.

An adequate study of the plot of *Tom Jones* considered as a first principle of artistic construction would require answers to these and possibly still

other questions all of them of a kind which the traditional ways of discussing works with plots have tended to leave out of account. My intention, however, has been not so much to attempt a reevaluation of *Tom Jones* as to make clear the assumptions and illustrate some of the possibilities for practical criticism of a kind of whole-part analysis of narrative compositions such as has not too often, I think, been undertaken. Like all critical methods it has its limitations and it must be judged accordingly in terms not only of the problems it is peculiarly fitted to deal with but of those which lie beyond its scope. Its distinctive character derives, in the first place from the fact that it views a work of art as a dynamic whole which affects our emotions in a certain way through the functioning together of its elements in subordination to a determinate poetic form. It is better suited therefore, to exhibit the degree of efficiency with which the parts of a work or section thereof contribute to the maximum achievement of its effect than to do full justice to the qualities over and above this which characterize in all fine works the development of the parts themselves: there are many strokes in the representation of Partridge for instance which no one would wish away, yet which are bound to seem gratuitous when considered merely in the light of his somewhat minor role in the evolution of the comic action.<sup>10</sup> The method again is specific, in the sense that it seeks to appraise a writer's performance in a given work in relation to the nature and requirements of the particular task he has set himself: the assumed end being the perfection of the work as an artistic whole of the special kind he decided it should be. It is a method better adapted consequently to the appreciation of success or failure in individual works than it is to the making of comparative judgments based on criteria of literary greatness or seriousness that transcend differences of kind: we clearly need other terms and distinctions than those provided by a poetics of forms if we are to talk discriminatingly about the general qualities of intelligence and feeling reflected in *Tom Jones* or even be able to defend Fielding against the recent and surely somewhat insensitive judgment that his attitudes and his concern with human nature, are simple and not such as to produce an effect of anything but monotony (on a mind that is demanding more than external action) when exhibited at the

<sup>10</sup> The kind of thing I have in mind is well illustrated by the late George Orwell's remarks on the unnecessary detail in Dickens (see his *Dickens, Dahl & Others* [New York 1946] pp. 59-65). Of the same order is the following sentence from the account of the fight with the captain in *Joseph Andrews* Book III chap. xi (italics mine): "The uplifted hanger dropped from his hand and he fell prostrated on the floor with a lumpish noise and his halfpence rattled in his pocket." It is difficult to conceive of any functional analysis however refined its principles that would afford premises for the discussion of such traits and yet their presence or absence is obviously an important factor in our discrimination between distinguished and undistinguished writing.

length of an epic in prose.<sup>10</sup> Finally, the method is one which depends on the analytical isolation of works of art as finished products from the circumstances and processes of their origin. It is therefore better fitted to explain those effects in a work which would be specifically the same in any other work of whatever date that was constructed in accordance with the same combination of artistic principles than those effects which must be attributed to the fact that the work was produced by a given artist, in a given period, at a given stage in the evolution of the species or tradition to which it belongs. We have obviously to go beyond formal criticism if we would assess Fielding's originality as a writer of comic romance, or account for that peculiarly eighteenth-century flavor in *Tom Jones* which causes us to reflect that unique and unrepresentative as Fielding's novel is when considered as a whole, it could yet have been written at no other time.

The criticism of forms needs thus to be supplemented by the criticism of qualities in both of the senses just indicated, and also by historical inquiries of various sorts. This granted, however, two things can be said: the first of which is that although the criticism of forms is only one among a number of valid and useful critical methods, it is still the sole method capable of dealing adequately—i.e., with a minimum of unanalyzed terms—and at the same time literally—i.e., in terms of causes and effects rather than analogies—with those characteristics and values in any literary work which derive from its construction as a self-contained whole endowed with a power of affecting us in a particular way by virtue of the manner in which its internal parts are conceived and fitted together. It is a method, therefore, which ought to have a strong appeal to the many students of literature in our time who wish to consider their subject in a now famous phrase, as literature and not another thing, but who are temperamentally averse to analogical procedures and intellectually dissatisfied with those modern critical systems which, however literal, provide no analysis of any except one or two of the internal causes of literary effects. And the second point is perhaps equally clear, namely that although the criticism of qualities and the investigation of historical origins and significances may achieve important results independently of the criticism of forms, as the past history of practical criticism and literary scholarship shows, both of these modes of judging literary productions would gain considerably in rigor and scope if they were founded on, and hence controlled by, a prior analysis of works from the point of view of their peculiar principles of construction and the special artistic problems which these presented to their writers. We should then, perhaps, have less qualita-

tive criticism of the dogmatic sort which reproaches writers of poems, dramas, and novels perfect enough in their respective kinds for not exhibiting virtues of language or thought incompatible with the specific tasks these writers chose to undertake, and likewise fewer literary histories in which the achievements of authors are discussed exclusively in terms of materials and techniques without reference to the formal ends that helped to determine how these were used.



## The Scarlet Letter

*Nathaniel Hawthorne*

ANALYSIS BY THE EDITORS

IT is typical of much of Hawthorne's work to be concerned deeply with the effects of sin and moral turpitude upon not only the sinner but upon later generations as well. Hawthorne implies that the commission of a sin, much as the dropping of a stone in a pool of water, creates ripples and consequences far greater than the original act itself, often encompassing the innocent as well as the guilty, often lasting for generations beyond. In *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne takes up the subject of the effect of a single adulterous act upon a number of people, notably the adulteress herself, Hester Prynne.

It is significant, however, that the act of adultery, from which all of the action stems, takes place prior to the opening of the novel. If we disregard the long introduction in which Hawthorne seeks for verisimilitude through an account of the finding of the record of Hester Prynne's case, the novel opens with the punishment of the scaffold about to be visited upon Hester, whom we do not know at first except as a young woman who is evidently guilty of a moral offense.

This structure serves notice, of course, that the central concern of the story is not with the act of adultery itself but with the effects of the act. It means in consequence that Hawthorne does not propose in his novel to inquire deeply into the motives for the act nor even to conclude that the act was understandable or, on the other hand, completely without justification. While it is true that he points out somewhat later that Hester was young

<sup>10</sup> F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (New York [1949]) p. 4.



and Chillingworth derelict he does not offer this as justification or even as explanation of particular import

When Hester has spent the requisite time in shameful exposure to the mob and has sewn the red letter on her dress she has to all intents and purposes discharged her debt to society which has punished her for her transgression and is presumably satisfied that accounts have been settled. Since however, Hawthorne has not chosen to concern himself with the offense itself it is hardly possible to be concerned with the punishment—on the surface all that has been produced is a simple narrative of crime and punishment with which we should have no reason to be especially involved. There is at the beginning nothing in Hester except perhaps her steady demeanor in her humiliating situation, to lead us to consider the case as particularly significant.

Thus the problem arises almost immediately as to what the crux of the novel really is. The only possibility of interest can lie in the way in which Hester constitutes her own situation—in short the structure of the early chapters emphasizes what is the real subject of the novel, the choice which Hester must make of her own situation. She can reject the idea that she has been sinful and thus limit her punishment to what she is compelled by force to endure or she can accept the judgment of society as a just one and convert her experience into a meaningful source of strength.

The development of the novel insofar as Hester is concerned makes clear the choice that she makes. She refuses to leave the community even though in so doing she would free herself of the obloquy of her townspeople; she continues to wear the identifying letter long after it is required that she do so; and she accepts with patience and fortitude the outcast state which is hers. At no point does she rail against the moral order, protest her innocence, or claim that her burden is too heavy for her sin. For Hawthorne has created in Hester Prynne a woman who is not the victim of an unjust society in protest against which she spends her life; but a woman who recognizes that she has sinned and who accepts the terms of her punishment—a woman who, in short, grows stronger because of her belief in the moral universe. Hester's redemption and betterment comes from her recognition of having been wrong and from her willingness, at great and unnecessary sacrifice, to affirm the rightness of the religious laws. In this respect Hester is a tragic figure who gains—through what appear to be at first glance the harsh operations of an unjust code—insight, strength and understanding much as Oedipus after twenty years of being led by his daughter arrives finally at Colonus not a weak but a strong man capable of acting as the instrument rather than the victim of the gods.

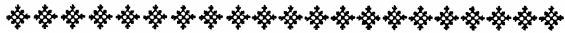
But things are not quite so simple to Hawthorne's view. He is struck by the essential irony of Hester's position which is the essential irony of the Puritan view that good comes out of bad. If this be true, cannot bad equally stem from good? Consider in this light the curious role of Chillingworth. As the wronged husband Chillingworth is to all intents the person in whose name society is punishing Hester; that is Hester's offense is against Chillingworth personally in whose behalf as husband society—interested in the preservation of institutions—acts. Hester's offense is unjustified because in the first place the nature of moral laws is such as to apply without regard to particular circumstances of conditions and second because although Hawthorne refers to Chillingworth as having deserted Hester and as being considerably older these factors are not stressed sufficiently as mitigations of Hester's conduct. Of all the persons in the novel Chillingworth stands at the beginning as the most wronged and as the most free from evil taint. His position like that of husbands in such circumstances is unassailable in the law of morals. Yet as the story progresses Chillingworth becomes increasingly evil, almost in proportion as Hester becomes increasingly good. From a cavalier and unsympathetic attitude toward his wife Chillingworth degenerates to a point where he himself sins by becoming vengeful. His cunning and cruel vengefulness is as wrong morally as Hester's adultery; the roles have been reversed and Chillingworth emerges as the ironic symbol of evil from good as Hester emerges as the ironic symbol of good from evil.

Dimmesdale is of course equally guilty with Hester; perhaps more so unless we are convinced of the double standard of morality. Whatever Hester's weakness may have been it is certain that Dimmesdale did not have the moral courage to restrain his desire; a lack which is particularly significant in view of the fact that he is a minister and hence more than ordinarily aware of the proper modes of conduct. Even when Hester is punished Dimmesdale does not come forward, he conducts himself throughout the novel with astounding feebleness and lack of moral fiber. Hester, who once in a sense required Dimmesdale, requires him no longer—her own strength, drawn from recognition of her state, is much greater than his and it is not a question at all of his coming forward to save her. But Dimmesdale who appears weak and without courage demonstrates yet another irony that of strength from weakness. Because of his intense personal suffering because of the need he has had for years to live with a sense of guilt and a knowledge of weakness because of the searching to which he has been compelled to subject his soul—Dimmesdale changes from an expounder of empty and theoretical moral-



ity to a warm, passionate spiritual leader whose closeness to his parishioners is increased by humanity and insight which have resulted from his own ineffectual struggle against remorse and conscience. Weak on one level, Dimmesdale is even stronger on another, with a further ironic twist that he is stronger as a preacher for precisely the reason that would tend to make a preacher unacceptable and incapable of holding a pulpit.

It is true that Hawthorne, by training and education, was in the Puritan tradition, but it is equally true that far from writing *The Scarlet Letter* as a didactic treatise, he approaches the problem of sin with deep sympathy, understanding, awareness of the irony of life, and a tolerance which, far from weakening his point of view, serves to strengthen it and make it humane.



## Madame Bovary

*Gustave Flaubert*

ANALYSIS BY THE EDITORS

FLAUBERT, who had grown up in the provinces where the romantic movement, though dead in Paris, still survived and exercised its influence upon him, wrote *Madame Bovary* at the instigation of his good friend and critic, Maxime du Camp, who had found *Salammbô* and *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* far too romantic for the contemporary taste. The writing of a completely realistic novel based upon fact and concerned with objective detail was recommended to Flaubert as a sort of necessary discipline, and he undertook the composition of *Madame Bovary* with these purposes in mind.

The story, based in part upon actual events which took place in Yvetot, was that of Emma Bovary, a young woman married to a dull husband and confined in the spiritless and empty atmosphere of a small provincial town. The subtitle of the book, *Mœurs de Province*, indicates to what extent Flaubert was concerned with the nature of the social background. Becoming increasingly restless in the conjugal routine, yearning always for the bright balls and clever conversation of the urban cosmopolis of which she has formed a romantic idea from read-

ing and idle dreams, Emma becomes involved in an amorous intrigue with a man of the world, Rodolphe, who seduces her by the clever use of mannerisms and attitudes which he knows from experience will quite turn the head of the innocent young country matron.

The first portion of the novel is devoted to a description of two major things: the daily life of the town and of the Bovary home, and the romantic dreams of Emma. Against an almost painstaking catalogue of furniture, streets, rooms, habits, clothing, trivial conversation, and aspects of provincial life, the character of Emma is carefully drawn with the purpose of showing the contrast between her life as it is and the life which she desires. Emma's marriage to Charles does not satisfy her, and whatever she thought she saw in him of the dashing or romantic lover soon disappears; she recognizes that while good and considerate, he is incredibly dull and quite incapable of satisfying her. Although Emma's dreams are made of false material and are perhaps too adolescent to be appropriate to a young woman, yet the picture is so emphasized by Flaubert that we cannot help but have a certain sympathy for her, which does much to help us to understand her seduction and affair with Rodolphe. It is not so much that Flaubert leads us to condone the affair as that he leads us to understand it—perhaps, as the French say, *comprendre c'est pardonner*, to understand is to forgive. Emma is foolish; her values are false; she is living in a world of dreams—but, as she is painted in the early chapters—she is very human, and Rodolphe, full of the worldly knowledge so often associated in fable with his calling, has little trouble in seducing her by seeming to be the very dashing lover whom she has always wanted. And the truth of the matter is that Emma is completely in love with Rodolphe; whether she should be or not is not the question—the fact is that she is.

Thus the first portion of *Madame Bovary* is an acute study of a woman in love, a woman with whose weakness we are not unsympathetic, a woman who is, it appears, at least partially the victim of her environment, a woman who commits adultery because of her passion and not for evil purposes, a woman human and understandable. In this sense the first section of the novel could stand almost alone.

But after Rodolphe's defection, which could have been unexpected only by Emma, the story changes. Emma proceeds along a path which leads her from sin to sin and degenerates morally and spiritually to the ultimate degradation of all to a woman of her church, suicide. From adultery, Emma moves to lying, stealing her husband's money, neglecting her children and her home, cheating, subterfuge, and further amorous affairs. From an innocent and ro-

mantic young woman Emma becomes, in her affair with Leon not only his mistress but the sexual aggressor—it is she who seduces him as if by so doing she repays what was done to her by Rodolphe. And she loses any sense of decorum or modesty. She flaunts her behavior almost proudly in the face of the town, cares nothing for appearances or for her husband's feelings or reputation, acts wantonly and without discretion until, as a matter of course, her liaison and her complications are discovered and there is nothing left but self-destruction. We must remember that Emma was educated in a convent to understand the seriousness of her taking poison and thus violating a cardinal tenet of her belief.

At the end Emma is not repentant, only regretful. She hears a street song coming in the window and listens to it while the priest is administering the final rites, so that even the last solace of religion is wrongly commingled with the secular. Emma does not recognize or understand that her conduct has been wrong except insofar as it has not been successful. The implication is clear that if she had her life to live again she would act in the same way.

This lack of understanding of her own moral situation comes from Emma's own conviction that she is the victim of society. She justifies her behavior on the grounds that the nature of society is such as to compel a sensitive woman to seek satisfaction in illicit ways: if only she had had another kind of life she would never have been compelled to act as she did! Of course, to a large extent this is the thesis of the novel—the understanding of human behavior in terms of social forces and the pardoning in consequence of irresponsible conduct—on the grounds that it is not so much the individual who is to blame, as the social order. This thesis underlies much of our current penal philosophy, especially with respect to juvenile crime, and our society recognizes its responsibility in cases where offenders have, in effect, never had a decent chance. It is instructive to compare this thesis with that of Hawthorne's in *The Scarlet Letter*, to whom Hester Prynne's sin is hers and hers alone, to accept, reject or suffer for as she chooses, but not to blame on others, however strong the provocation.

The form and structure of the novel then, explain Emma as the product of her environment, and there can be no doubt that Flaubert, through his insistence upon detailed description of provincial modes, so intended us to understand her. But this intention does not account for the turn the novel takes after the affair with Rodolphe is over. At that point Emma is still a sympathetic person, to a large extent she has been led astray by her environment and her own weakness. But after Rodolphe, Emma goes much further than even the sociology of her situation would make credible unless an additional element—

Emma's own individual moral weakness—is introduced to explain how she acts. The social motivation being insufficient to account for such a rapid toboggan to moral degeneracy, it is necessary to postulate that there is something in Emma herself, as apart from her character as a victim of society which makes it impossible for her to exercise caution and restraint.

The point is that Emma's original sin leads her to other sins. Adultery leads to lying, lying to stealing, stealing to neglect of her family, neglect to wantonness, wantonness to suicide. Having lost restraint once in a single, and perhaps understandable context, Emma loses restraint completely. It is as if Flaubert were saying two things at once: that Emma is a victim of society and hence is to be at least pitied, and that sin can lead only to destruction. Despite the fact that the novel was banned because of certain scenes to which the keepers of public morals took exception, it is one of the most moral—one of the most stringently moral—that has ever been written for never was the thesis that crime does not pay more starkly illustrated.



## The Return of the Native

*Thomas Hardy*

ANALYSIS BY E. P. LAWRENCE

THOMAS HARDY'S *The Return of the Native* was published in 1878, and like all his novels it shows the effect of Darwinian natural science upon the thought of the time. One effect of natural science in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was to cause people to lose faith in a universe in which justice and virtue were rewarded and injustice and vice were appropriately punished. In particular *The Return of the Native* reads like a demonstration of the operation of chance or fate—something beyond the control of men—in the lives of human beings. Not one of Hardy's characters is evil, yet each one of them who tries to give order and direction to his life, who consciously tries to achieve happiness—is

thwarted and punished. The name usually given to this point of view is determinism.

The structure, the setting and the characters of *The Return of the Native* have only one purpose, to show that man must submit to a universal order of things which he cannot understand and which is not at all interested in his happiness or well being. In structure the book is tight and compact. The action begins on November 5, Guy Fawkes Day, and ends one year later. Moreover it begins and ends in sorrow—the temporary delay in marriage between Thomasin Yeobright and Damon Wildeve foreshadows faintly the sorrow laid up for the characters at the end of the action. And by compressing the events of the story into the limits of one year Hardy manages to suggest a seasonal symbolism: the characters emerge from the darkness of Winter into the Spring of hope and the Summer of apparent happiness and press forward into an Autumn fraught with disaster.

The march of events from beginning to end had the inevitability of fate. This will be clear from an outline of the five books which make up the main plot. Book I, *The Three Women*, introduces the three female characters—Mrs Yeobright, Thomasin Yeobright and Eustacia Vye—and relates them to Wildeve. In Book II, *The Arrival*, the complement of characters is filled with the arrival of Clym Yeobright, Wildeve and Thomasin marry, and Clym and Eustacia meet. These last two are married in Book III, *The Fascination*, and Clym is estranged from his mother. At this time the threads of the tragedy have been brought together and the pattern follows inevitably, symbolized by the title of Book IV, *The Closed Door*. Here Clym's mother journeys across the heath to seek a reconciliation with her son; is refused admittance to the cottage by Eustacia and dies on the return journey. It is the closed door which precipitates the tragedy in Book V, *The Discovery*. Clym discovers that Eustacia has been responsible for Mrs Yeobright's death; she leaves him and returns to her grandfather; plans an elopement with Wildeve, and she and Wildeve drown in the mill race of Shadwater Weir.

Only one flaw marks the structure of the novel. Hardy was impelled by some reason—possibly public opinion to add a sixth book, *Aftercourses*, in which he induces a semblance of a happy ending by allowing the widowed Thomasin to remarry. The material in this book bears no relation to the main events of the story; if read at all it should be read as an appendix.

*The Return of the Native* is dominated by its setting. All the action takes place on Egdon Heath, roughly located in the southwest part of England, a district to which Hardy gave the name of Wessex. The heath country is bleak, barren, sparsely popu-

lated and virtually primeval, a fitting backdrop for tragedy. The physical character of the heath serves an important function in the novel. It represents impersonal, ageless, natural force, older than man, unconquered by the plough and yielding only a bare subsistence to a few furzcutters. It is inhabited by natives who are equally primitive, untouched by the graces of civilization and still practicing the art of black magic.

These natives are as much a part of the setting as the heath itself. Their lives are dominated by the meagerness of nature, the cycle of the seasons and the isolated nature of the place. They light fires on Guy Fawkes Day, perform the mumming play of St George during the Christmas season and celebrate festivals by dancing on the heath. These activities are not self-conscious revivals of old customs but survivals, without essential meaning and performed out of habit. The setting is a projection of the impersonal forces that dominate human events. Hardy implies that thought, desire and will are not strong enough to thwart or fend off the unhappiness and tragedy which are the basis of all human life.

Against the background of this setting Hardy's characters struggle in vain for happiness. Each is the victim of human fallibility and the desire to shape his life according to his own desires. Eustacia Vye hates the heath and dreams of a larger, more luxurious life elsewhere. She first encourages the love of Wildeve as a means to her purpose. When Wildeve marries Thomasin, Eustacia then turns to Clym, the native who has returned from Paris to live on the heath. She weds Clym in the hope that he will return to Paris; he determines instead to remain in England and to work for the betterment of his fellow men. Thus Eustacia's ruling passion, a desire for escape, is thwarted. At the moment it seems on the threshold of realization. At this instant she makes her reckless pact with Wildeve, and the stage is set for their doom.

Similarly Wildeve is the sport of fate. He is the proprietor of a local inn, the Quiet Woman. Thomasin loves him, against the advice of her aunt and Wildeve marries her seemingly more from a desire to oppose her aunt than from any strong passion. At the same time he remains fastened to Eustacia by the bonds of passion and so becomes involved in her downfall.

Eustacia and Wildeve are not reflective people; their acts are dictated mainly by instinct and emotion. One would, however, expect life to run more smoothly for Clym Yeobright, the thinker. He is the central character of the novel for it is in terms of him that Hardy's belief that man cannot control his own destiny must stand or fall. The other chief actors are in part the authors of their own downfall for they act on impulse. But strength of mind and

will, represented by Clym, prove to be no guard against the operations of fate

Like Wildeve Clym is passionately attracted to Eustacia. He marries her against the protests of his mother and so sets in motion a chain of events that accomplishes his downfall. Hardy even demonstrates that strength of will is a disadvantage in the search for happiness. Eustacia longs for that rookery of pomp and vanity<sup>3</sup> Paris. Clym takes her instead to a lonely heath cottage where he can find solitude for meditation and study in preparation for teaching. Clym's determination and independence are admirable in the abstract when his eyes fail because of overwork he dons smoked glasses and workman's clothes and adopts that meanest of heath occupations furze-cutting.

Thus Clym's strength of character contributes to his end. Eustacia, born for passion and life, becomes lonely, she believes that Clym's menial occupation degrades her and for lack of anything better to do drifts into a renewed intimacy with Wildeve. The scene is now set and lighted for the final act in the tragedy.

At this point it is necessary to say a word about Hardy's use of coincidence in bringing about the sequence of events which lead to the tragedy in *The Return of the Native*. One such device is the peddlerman, Diggory Venn. Before the opening of the story he had been Thomasin's suitor, had been rejected, and had adopted his itinerant calling as a kind of romantic escape. His activities in the story are decidedly providential. After an absence of several years from the neighborhood he returns exactly at the moment that Thomasin's first attempt to marry Wildeve ends in failure, and his cart provides her transportation home.

Believing that Thomasin's happiness depends upon marriage to Wildeve, Diggory helps to bring this about. Again, when the feeble-minded Christian Cantle plays at dice with Wildeve and gambles away the dowry of Clym and Thomasin, Diggory wins it back and returns the money to its rightful owners. Diggory always acts out of pure devotion to Thomasin, but since he does not understand the true meaning of the situation his acts complicate rather than simplify the lives he interferes in. Hardy clearly means to show that good intentions are not enough to avert whatever doom is prepared for human beings.

A more frequent kind of coincidence used by Hardy to aid in the development of the plot is the operation of sheer chance. By this means Hardy shows that human decisions and their consequences depend more on accident—casualty—he calls it in one of his poems—than on plan or foresight. For instance when Eustacia hears of the arrival of Clym in the neighbourhood she forms a romantic mental

picture of him and desires to meet him. Under ordinary circumstances such a meeting was improbable for the Vyes and the Yeobrights belonged to different classes. But the chance that the local mummers were using an outbuilding belonging to the Vyes as a place of rehearsal for the Christmas play gives her an opportunity to disguise herself as a mummer and accompany the troupe to the Yeobright homecoming party. This chance brings together two lives and sets them on the path to disaster.

Again it is chance that sends Eustacia off to her final and fatal tryst with Wildeve. On the opening night of the story Eustacia had summoned Wildeve to her by lighting a Guy Fawkes fire on the heath. This fire was tended by a neighbour lad who was ignorant of its purpose. A year later when Eustacia has left Clym and has returned to her grandfather's home the same lad to amuse her, again lights a fire. The blaze summons Wildeve who proposes their elopement.

The last trick of fate in the novel is the delay of the delivery of Clym's letter of reconciliation so that it does not arrive in time to forestall the elopement. Eustacia goes off into the wild November night to meet Wildeve, misses the way, stumbles into the weir and is drowned. Wildeve, waiting near by, plunges into the water after her and is sucked under too.

These deaths, if unmerited, are at least merciful. Clym Yeobright is left to bear the load of guilt, and ironically to spell out a meaning to the story which must have made the Gods laugh. Looking at the dead Eustacia, he says

She is the second woman I have killed this year. I was a great cause of my mother's death and I am the chief cause of hers.

How? said Venn.

I spoke cruel words to her and she left my house. I did not invite her back until it was too late. It would have been a charity to the living had the river overwhelmed me and borne her up.

But you can't charge yourself with crimes in that way, said Venn. You may as well say that the parents be the cause of a murder by the child for without the parents the child would never have been begot.

Yes Venn that is very true but you don't know all the circumstances. If it had pleased God to put an end to me it would have been a good thing for all. But I am getting used to the horror of my existence. They say that a time comes when men laugh at misery through long acquaintance with it. Surely that time will come to me!

Your aim has always been good, said Venn. Why should you say such desperate things?

No they are not desperate. They are only hopeless and my regret is that for what I have done no man or law can punish me!

Thus to the very end Hardy insists on the victory of fate over the human spirit. There is no tragedy here merely unrelieved suffering.

The question may then be asked: who then are the happy people? The answer implied in *The Return of the Native* is those who submit. They are the dull clods who inhabit the heath who have no desires beyond the physical ones of the moment and who expect nothing from life. This is not happiness but an absence of unhappiness. It is not strange that Victorian readers found Hardy's view of life somewhat astringent and that he had to wait until the twentieth century to come into his own.



## Victory

Joseph Conrad

ANALYSIS BY A. J. M. SMITH

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### I

JOSEPH CONRAD is one of the most remarkable figures in the whole range of English literature. He was born in Poland in 1857, the son of well-to-do parents of the landowning class. His full name was Teodor Jozef Konrad Korzeniowski. His parents died as a result of the hardships suffered in exile to northern Russia for the part they had played in the Polish nationalist movement, and Conrad was left an orphan at the age of ten under the care of a maternal uncle. In boyhood Conrad developed an overpowering desire to go to sea, and in 1874 he travelled to Marseilles and gained experience as a seaman on French sailing vessels. He took part in some dangerous gun-running expeditions to Spain, visited England, sailed before the mast to Australia and back, learned English, passed his examinations for Third Mate, and then served as an officer on ships sailing to the Dutch East Indies and the Malay Archipelago. His personal experiences on these voyages gave him the material for some of his best-known novels and stories: *Almayer's Folly* (1895), *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897), *Lord Jim* (1900), *Youth* (1902), and *Victory* (1915). In 1886 he passed his examinations and

became a Master Mariner. The same year he became a British subject. In 1890 he went to the Belgian Congo and encountered the experiences that are retold in the finest of his long short stories, *The Heart of Darkness* (1902). At this time he was beginning to set down his experiences in the form of fiction and was at work on his first book, *Almayer's Folly*, which was published five years later. His last ship was a famous sailing ship, the *Torrens*, and among the passengers on the voyage from Australia to England in 1893 was John Galsworthy, not yet a famous novelist. But Galsworthy read the manuscript of Conrad's first novel and encouraged the Anglo-Polish sailor to devote himself seriously and exclusively to writing.

In 1896 Conrad gave up the sea, married and settled down in Kent. Here in the latter half of a life that until then had been spent in adventurous action on the seven seas and in the Far East, he devoted himself to writing in a language not his native one: a series of novels that won him recognition before his death in 1924 as one of the finest English novelists of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

II *Victory* is subtitled *An Island Tale* and on the surface that is what it is—an exciting story of love, adventure and self-sacrifice in the South Seas. The central figure is romantic enough. He is the aristocratic Axel Heyst, a self-exiled and disillusioned wanderer who believes that the only way to escape the cruelty and futility of life is to look on the spectacle with a mixture of pity and ironic detachment, studiously refraining from involvement in action. But he has failed to take into account his human sympathies and the strength of the appeals of decency and justice, and on two occasions—one preliminary to the main action but subtly and fatally connected with it, and the other the main action itself—Heyst is drawn into active participation in life. The results are not fortunate. The best intentions go awry; the noblest motives lead to disastrous conclusions. Heyst's pessimistic view of humanity as a pitiful mixture of folly and knavery might well seem to be justified by the concatenation of events which brings a tragic end to his humane and quixotic involvement in the life of a human being who is described as 'cornered'—the girl Lena. Certainly in the gross imbecility and malicious cowardice of the Teutonic innkeeper Schomberg, in the devilish concentration upon murder of the sinister Mr Jones and his feline secretary Ricardo to say nothing of the subhuman savagery of their doglike servant Pedro and the inscrutable self-interest of Mr Wang, Heyst's Chinese servant—there are wickedness and folly enough. But Heyst, who has the dignity and

<sup>1</sup> Besides the novels already named, Conrad wrote *Nostromo* (1904), his longest and finest work, *The Secret Agent* (1907), *Under Western Eyes* (1911), *Chance* (1913), *The Shadow Line* (1917), *The Rescue* (1920), and *The Rover* (1923).

the noble intentions of a genuine tragic hero has the fatal weakness too. And it is this fatal weakness as much as any external agency, that brings about his downfall. His pride and his very philosophy of withdrawal, rooted in pity and sympathy though they are, have unfitted him to defend himself and the girl whose fate he has become responsible for. Indeed it is one of the fundamental ironies in a book that is drenched in irony. Heyst at the last in a tragic denouement that recalls the corpse-littered end of *Hamlet* realizes his own responsibility. Ah Davidson, he cries, woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope to love,—and to put its trust in life.

Heyst has realized too late that his philosophy of sceptical detachment based on a disillusioned under-estimate of the worth of life itself had been responsible for his failure to know and have faith in either Lena or himself and was the prime cause, too, of his inability, both practical and moral, to deal effectively and certainly with the threat launched by evil forces from outside. This is his tragedy and he recognizes its consequences as clearly at the end as did the great exemplar of the paralyzing effect of scepticism upon action, Hamlet himself.

III Conrad was an extremely self-conscious artist, and his experiments in the technique of the novel, his attempts to heighten suspense, enhance reality, and drive home the point of his story by the artful and gradual revelation of varying partial points of view, link him with the great master of modern fiction, Henry James, whose disciple indeed, he was in *Victory* and certain other of his later novels. The structure of *Victory* is well worth examining by the reader who wishes to get the maximum enjoyment from the book. Such a reader should keep his attention alert to catch the many subtle and significant shifts in the point of view from which events are perceived and comprehended, a challenge all the more stimulating because these shifts may occur several times within a chapter and sometimes within a paragraph or even a single sentence.

The novel is divided into four parts, the first two of them being a necessary preliminary to the main action which although it has been set in motion, is not presented directly nor its consequences worked out until Parts III and IV.

The first part introduces the protagonist of the tragedy, Axel Heyst—enchanted Heyst as the traders and business men in the islands of the Dutch East Indies call him. The whole of Part I is presented from the point of view of an unnamed narrator, a disinterested but well-meaning representative of the local white traders. From the disjointed and fragmentary knowledge of this observer we learn the local gossip about uprooted Heyst, about his rescue of the grateful Morrison, a trader and shipowner

whom Heyst is able to save from financial ruin and who promptly showers upon his somewhat embarrassed benefactor a load of gratitude that threatens to destroy Heyst's carefully cherished independence. We learn too of the stupid and malicious hotel-keeper Schomberg whose jealous hatred of the unconscious Heyst sets in motion a flood of malicious gossip, which, when Morrison, on furlough in England, catches pneumonia and dies, goes so far as to accuse Heyst of swindling his friend and sending him home to die. Of course no one believes Schomberg's fantastic interpretation of events, but later the calumny is to rise up before Heyst, whose high-minded disgust poisons the very source of action at the moment when he most needs energy and decision.

The affair of Morrison is preliminary to the main action. This concerns itself with Heyst's chivalrous and well-meaning rescue of the girl Lena whom he saves from brutal mistreatment and from the unwanted attentions of Schomberg, by taking her away from her place in a touring ladies' orchestra and eloping with her to his solitary island of Samsar. Lena is a pathetic and charming figure and Heyst's impulse to save her is honorable and generous. The action that follows is concerned with what results from this decisive action: a second and much more hazardous departure from Heyst's philosophy of aloofness.

The crucial event itself is presented in Part I only indirectly and inconclusively from the point of view of an observer who picks up the story from gossip and hearsay, and it is not until Part II that the action backtracks upon itself to present mainly from the point of view of Heyst himself, the significant and eagerly awaited details of Heyst's meeting with Lena and his determination to become responsible for her fate and take her with him to his island.

The first two books are a preliminary starting of the action and in the dramatic structure of the novel correspond to Act I of *Othello*. Just as the scene shifts to Cyprus where Othello and Desdemona have been transported, so too in *Victory*, Book III (the beginning of Act II) the scene shifts to the solitary island, and Heyst and Lena take the center of the stage.

At this point in the action Heyst might have echoed Othello's unconscious irony. If it were now to die, 'twere now to be most happy.

Heyst and Lena are two innocent beings in what seems to be a paradise. But Heyst has already partaken of the apple of involvement, and though he does not know it, evil is already preparing itself to descend upon him and destroy him.<sup>2</sup> Heyst is igno-

<sup>2</sup> The metaphor of Eden and the sinister suggestion of its loss is developed by Conrad with great subtlety and skill on the first page of Part III.

rant of what the reader already knows from the closing chapters of Part II. The deadly and irresponsible forces of chaos in the persons of Mr. Jones and his follower Ricardo having been excited by Schomberg's fantastic tale of Heyst's wealth hidden on the island, are already on their way to break in upon their unsuspecting and easily disarmed victim.

From this point on the movement of the story is filled with suspense and a cumulatively mounting horror. We watch the doomed man as Jones and Ricardo call Heyst play out with delicate irony and magnificent courage a losing battle with opponents whose ruthlessness, singleness of purpose and weapons he cannot match. It is Lena whose life of suffering and exploitation has given her knowledge, courage and determination who takes the risk of losing Heyst's love—his full comprehension she has never had—by entering into a deceptive compact with the enemy, stealing a weapon and opening a breach between Jones and Ricardo that might but for a misdirected bullet have ended in a real instead of a quixotic and ambiguous victory.

IV. Conrad differs from such contemporaries among the Edwardian novelists as John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett and H. G. Wells in that his interests are not sociological or humanitarian but aesthetic and philosophical. He was a disciple of the great Russian masters, Turgeniev and Dostoevsky, and of the Europeanised American, Henry James. In widening the scope of the novel and developing its technique it may be said that he applied the methods of impressionism to romantic or exotic subjects and that he carried forward (along with Henry James) fruitful experiments in the form and structure of the novel, and anticipated the experimental novel of Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, and James Joyce.

His work is an important stage in the development of a subjective or inner realism that sought to apply to the mental processes of his characters the same sort of minute and dispassionate analysis that the great French realists (Balzac, Flaubert, Zola) had applied to external objects and events. He does not plunge directly into the stream of consciousness as the brilliant Freudian novelists do, but he is as subtle and accurate as any of them in his analysis of the way in which sense impressions affect the consciousness. What is even more remarkable is the fact that he makes intensely thrilling drama out of the way in which mental processes are resolved into action and then out of the way in which those actions are evaluated in moral or ethical terms. Conrad is at once an impressionist, a dramatist and a moralist, and all three aspects are woven together to form an integral part of his work as an artist.

He has stated his concept of the function of the novel and of the responsibility of the novelist in the

Preface to one of the earliest of his masterpieces, *The Nigger of the 'Nacissus'* (1897), a short novel devoted entirely to the subjects that Conrad knew most intimately—sailing ships, the men who manned them and the sea itself. The novel as a work of art, he declared, makes its appeal to temperament. It must be an impression conveyed through the senses, and it must carry conviction to the hidden springs of responsive emotion. The artist, Conrad declared, descends into himself—nearly all Conrad's fiction is autobiographical—and makes an appeal to that part of our being that is not dependent on knowledge or wisdom. He speaks to our capacity for delight, wonder and sympathy. My task is, Conrad continued, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see.

The object of the artist, he describes in terms of impressionism and humanity. It is to snatch, in a moment of courage from the remorseless rush of time a passing phase of life. But this is only the beginning. The task approached in tenderness and faith is to hold up unquestioningly, without choice and without fear, the rescued fragment before all eyes in the light of a sincere mood. It is to show its vibration, its color, its form, reveal the substance of its truth, the stress and passion within the core of each convincing moment.

To arrest for the space of a breath the hands busy about the work of the earth and compel men entranced by the sight of distant goals to glance for a moment at the surrounding vision of form and colour, and to give them the understanding of these forms and colours that shall induce pity and sympathy, this is the aim of the sincere artist.

In these sentences from what amounts to a formal statement of Conrad's creed as an artist, the reader can hardly fail to detect the emphasis upon clarity of vision, personal integrity and an attitude toward humanity that is composed of about equal parts of sympathy and pity. It is at once sceptical and strongly ethical, and it is not difficult to see in it the germ of the attitudes that were later to crystallize in the figure of Axel Heyst.

The mixture of scepticism and faith of pity and sympathy, which is so fundamental a part of the temperament with which Conrad looks at life, is given an even more direct expression in another important document, A Familiar Preface to an autobiographical work entitled *A Personal Record*, published in 1912. Here, after developing along somewhat similar lines his theory of impressionism and artistic sincerity, he begins to speak of the spirit in which he is compelled to regard human life. The sight of human affairs, he says, deserves admiration and pity. And respect. Conscious resignation, informed by love, he declares to be the only possible



attitude in the face of the spectacle of human life and the problem of evil. Again the reader will be reminded of *Heyst* or perhaps of *Heyst's* philosophical father. Resignation—he goes on to say—is not the last word of wisdom. I am too much a creature of my time for that. But I think the proper wisdom is to will what the gods will without perhaps being certain what their will is—or even if they have a will of their own.

In spite of this apparent scepticism, Conrad's work testifies to the presence of an underlying faith, a faith he has said which holds that the temporal world rests on a few very simple ideas. It rests notably, among others, on the idea of Fidelity. It is this faith that Conrad's most striking characters uphold or just fail to hold on to or illustrate by denying it. With the case of *Victory* before us, it is not necessary to mention such figures as Lord Jim, Nostromo, or Captain MacWhirr (in *Typhoon*). Axel Heyst and Lena and Captain Davidson live in it, and two of them die in it, while Jones, Ricardo and the unspeakable Schomberg are faithful to nothing but themselves and consequently move about in a Hell of their own making.

The union of psychological insight and moral seriousness makes Conrad an important modern novelist, and *Victory* is an important modern novel because it is a prophecy of one of the great tragic paradoxes of our time: that man's best qualities often make him powerless to resist irrational force, ruthless cunning and the accident of surprise. In the face of the modern world dilemma, which Conrad prophetically foreknew, he places before us a pattern of what it means to be a freeman. He is sceptical without being disillusioned and detached without being unsympathetic, and he has been able to endow the heroic virtues of fidelity and courage with an almost religious significance without having recourse to the supernatural.



## Manhattan Transfer

*John Dos Passos*

ANALYSIS BY THE EDITORS

THE PERIOD immediately following the first World War was characterized by a tremendous burgeoning of the materialistic elements which more and more

had come to represent the peculiar contribution of America to cultural history. There is no lack of evidence in the work of earlier periods that the glitter and crassness of American mechanism had caused dismay and regret among many important writers, and as this country grew in size and power it became increasingly clear that these tendencies were becoming stronger and more marked.

One of the results of this situation was the development of an approach to human problems which saw man as hopelessly enmeshed in a complex vast and uncontrollable environment, the nature of which served to strip from him his individuality and to make of him an anonymous and unimportant cog in a tremendous social machine. To men of this view the terrifying aspect of modern life lay in its bigness and its impersonality, elements which were nowhere more certainly to be seen than in the city. The organization of the city in modern times gave of course a false appearance of some sort of unity, but an examination of urban life soon disclosed that men were living almost as isolated units, that their relations with other men took the form of hostile brushes rather than that of human fellowship. It was obvious that in the city there had come into being a form of society in which the loneliness of man and his essential lack of dignity or importance were to be found in an archetypal condition.

The task, then, to which Dos Passos primarily addressed himself in *Manhattan Transfer* was that of representing within the form of the novel the simultaneity of diverse human experience. Whereas other novelists had attempted to speak of larger problems in terms of a relatively few characters, Dos Passos wished above all to set the characters within a frame of reference which in his view was most typical of his age. For that reason it was necessary for him to develop a different technique to fit his particular artistic purposes, a technique in which the individual growth and change of the characters would always be subordinated to their larger anonymity in the complex social order. He sought a means of showing that at any particular time, if it were at all possible to gain a vantage point from which to see the entire organization—a multifariousness of single acts was occurring, each of which, to the individual engaged in it, was of central importance and each of which unknown to the participant, was of supreme indifference to everybody else. It is true, as Dos Passos demonstrates, that casual contacts often had unforeseen results, but from this it is possible only to deduce the utter casualness of the human order and the complete absence of rational or spiritual connection. It is not hard to see in the implications of what Dos Passos is saying the very subject matter of so great a writer as Kafka.

The most obvious technical device Dos Passos



# A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

James Joyce

ANALYSIS BY THE EDITORS

AT A PERIOD in history when the world is chaotic, the search for certainty often involves turning back upon one's self because the individual can serve when all else is confused, as a fixed point from which a new beginning can be made. For this reason the problem of seeking truth in our modern world is that of discovering one's own relation to the universe, and thus much of the twentieth-century literature is a subjective effort which attempts, in its careful exploration of the individual personality, to achieve a greater understanding of man in general. The writer thus often becomes the subject matter of his own work and it is in terms of his own problems and personality that he defines his times.

*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* typifies in many respects the subjective, autobiographical writing of the current century. The work revolves around three major crises in the life of Stephen Dedalus, whose life is based in large part upon Joyce's own experiences. In a larger sense, it is the life of an artist under the peculiar conditions of our modern world.

Generally speaking, the first portion of the novel treats of Stephen's infancy and of his growing consciousness of religion. This awareness of religion is followed by an awakening of his sexual instincts which culminates in an illicit liaison with a young lady at the age of sixteen. In the second part of the work Joyce treats of Stephen's attempts to reconcile his sexual misconduct with his deeply held religious beliefs, a struggle which takes place between the restraints of his orthodoxy with his consequent feeling of guilt and his rebellious attitude toward the church. Lastly, the novel is concerned with Stephen's college days and his final decision to quit Ireland for ever and to start out on the lonely voyage of the self-exiled.

The technique of the novel is based upon Joyce's purpose to cause the reader to participate in the feelings and thoughts of the protagonist, Stephen, as if he were Stephen himself. What is important is not *what* happens to Stephen but *what* Stephen *thinks*

and *feels* about what happens to him. Joyce takes the reader into the very consciousness of the character so that he views the world through Stephen's eyes. At the beginning of the novel, for example, there is an episode on the playing field in which we are able to feel all the deep and subtle reactions suffered by a very young boy—his sense of having been unjustly treated, his need to justify himself, his sense of loneliness and isolation from the other boys. The entire episode is told from Stephen's point of view, including the thoughts as well as the words. The development from point to point in the narrative is through the association of ideas rather than through the intervention of an external narrator. Joyce's novel exemplifies the technique of interior monologue which characterizes so much of modern writing and which he brought to perfection in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

Chapter II shows Stephen as an older boy who is becoming aware of literature, beauty and abstract ideas which he could not have earlier understood. He conceives himself, as do so many adolescents, in many parts and roles, especially that of a dashing Byronic hero, and when an essay he has submitted to his English class is rejected as heresy, he takes comfort and refuge in the part he plays. In addition, Stephen has reached an age where he is becoming aware of sexual matters, and he finally gives expression to these desires in a complicated, involved, half-mature, half-childish affair which is made up of intellectual rationalizations as well as of sincere feelings.

In Chapter III the novel treats of Stephen's remorse and of the battle he wages against his consciousness of having committed mortal sin. The idea of sin was ingrained within him before he was old enough to understand it or to comprehend the nature of theological doctrine. Now, as an adolescent, he carries with him the idea of sin which he absorbed as a child from words and sermons, and when he commits a wrongful act he reacts to it as he once reacted to the abstract idea. The chapter takes us through the torments of Stephen's guilty repentance, which is constituted for us by Joyce not in Joyce's own terminology but in that of Stephen himself who casts his own thoughts in a mold which he has derived from preachments.

The fourth chapter is the sort of peaceful interlude in which Stephen has time to resume more normal concerns of a young lad. He contemplates college and for the first time considers what he is going to do with his life. He becomes aware that he will be an artist and that what he thinks and feels is of the greatest importance to him. In this chapter he realizes a sense of difference from other young men and knows that he must go his own way in the future unencumbered by the doubt and torments

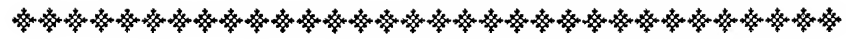
which come from trying to force his life into the general pattern

Chapter V is the story of Stephen's rebellion against churchly doctrines—a rebellion which is mainly an intellectual one in which although he can not bring himself to worship symbols he has come to consider false he cannot bring himself to deny the godly aspects of his theology. It is a revolt more against the observances of the church than against its tenets but is on a larger scale a revolt against the entire fabric of his background—a revolt against the complex of family, church, nation and society which are inextricably intertwined in his mind. To leave one is to leave them all and nothing can remain ex-

cept exile and a lonely journey in search of truth.

As the archetypal modern artist Stephen stands for two aspects of the modern artist which are of paramount importance his isolation from his culture and his flight from reality. It is possible to conclude that in Joyce's concept the artist has reached the final impasse of the age—a concern for self, an egocentric view and a preoccupation with form for the sake of form. On the other hand Joyce paints with an unexcelled subtlety. It is perhaps up to us to see to it that the sensitive qualities of Stephen do not fritter themselves away in loneliness and that one thing we can do is to understand him in all his complexity.





# THE DRAMA



## THE TECHNIQUE OF THE DRAMA

### *Some Elements of the Drama*

A play is a representation on a stage. This means that the events it is concerned with are neither narrated nor described but are exhibited to us in the form of an *action*—that is, in the form of a pattern of movement (including dialogue) of the actors on the stage. To the action all the other elements of the drama are necessarily subsidiary since they serve to enhance the action but are not in themselves the action, and this holds true even of the *plot* which is but the story of the action. The action consists of the playwright's choice of experience arranged in terms of his understanding of that experience and conveyed to us in the conventions of the medium of the drama. As we may recall from the introductory essay on the problems of literature, art is selective: out of the chaos and welter of experience the artist chooses those aspects of experience which seem to him most richly permeated with significance and arranges them in an effective pattern. This pattern is derived from experience and becomes in its turn a new experience, but since it is in this form a fresh and revealing form of experience, it throws fresh and revealing light on the experience from which it has originally been derived. Such a reconstruction of experience, when carried out in terms of the medium of the drama, is the action of the play.

Let us examine this idea, and particularly the distinction between action and plot, in the light of our reading of the plays reprinted here. The bare plot of *Detective Story* narrates the vicissitudes in the life of Detective McLeod which ultimately lead to his death, but it is the action of the play which arranges these vicissitudes in their proper order and which draws from the depiction of those events on the stage their proper meaning—the effects of the sin of pride. One sometimes reads in the newspapers an account of a detective killed in the line of duty, but such a story remains a piece of journalism because it has been conceived in terms of elementary narration alone. It is the action, drawn from the events by the playwright, which lifts these events to the plane of insight and understanding: raw experience has been given structure, style, and significance; that is to say, a work of art has been made. Again,

the plot of *Oedipus Rex* tells how King Oedipus endeavors to discover the murderer of his father, only to learn that he himself is the murderer, but it is the *action* which reveals the significance of this dramatic tale: man must not set his will against that of the gods. All the varied events of the drama, as prodigious as the events of life itself, are given meaning by the pattern of the action found in them by the dramatist. This does not mean, however, that the playwright uses the drama merely to illustrate wise saws or homely bits of wisdom. Nor does it mean that the drama is not didactic. What it does mean is that the dramatist, like all artists in reacting to experience, re-creates experience in the light of his medium: the formless and meaningless stuff of experience passes through his sensibility and emerges refashioned and refined in a work of art.

In the drama the action is performed by actors who represent individuals who are distinguished from each other in a number of different ways: the difference between the persons in the drama lies in their different *characters*. Character is exhibited by means of various devices; the most obvious of these belonging to the realm of stagecraft—such as costume, make-up, and the technique of acting, that is, gesture, voice, and so forth. A much more fundamental way of indicating difference of character consists in what the persons on the stage say to each other and in the mode and manner of their expression; that is, in *dialogue*. But the most important and revealing method of all is the depiction of what the characters choose to do and the statement of the reasons they give for their choices; that is to say, *motivation*. We understand a character by what he says and does, and these in turn are dependent on what attitudes he takes toward the other characters and toward the problems presented in the play, and his actions consequent on these attitudes. These attitudes and actions are in their turn the result of the emotional, intellectual, and moral bias of the persons involved in the action. The motivations of the characters vary with their relative importance in the play and with the playwright's own understanding of the forces which determine character. Here the influence of psychological theory is very considerable, as for example, the theory of humors on which the Elizabethan drama drew so heavily for its analysis of character, or the Freudian psychology which Eugene O'Neill has employed so effectively.

Though the artist may utilize such theories, the measure of his greatness lies in the way he transcends the limitation of his contemporary sources and creates characters of universal appeal and understanding. Falstaff may very well be descended from the Roman braggart soldier type, but he is very far from being only that. Shakespeare took over the type and used it to create a human being whose



character we recognize only too well, even if we know nothing of his literary genealogy. For subsidiary characters it is enough that they be given some simple and prominent feature which quickly and easily distinguishes them from the other characters in the play as for example the various detectives in *Detective Story* who are identified by some mannerism of dress or speech and no more. The same method is used in superficial plays in which we recognize the hero because he is so noble, the villain because he wears a moustache, the heroine because her eyes are blue and her hair is blonde (more or less), and the villainess because her hair is dark and she slinks and these are characteristic of the two most notable operas of our time—horse and soap.

But in serious drama, motivation is much more complex and much more deep-rooted in character. McLeod is motivated on many levels: his intellectual love of justice, his psychological reaction against his father, his emotional hatred of the criminal—all these coalesce to make up the man we know as McLeod. Yet complex as McLeod is, his character is simple when compared to Iago's. What does motivate Iago? He himself gives us at least three reasons for his hatred of Othello, yet we cannot help feeling that even these reasons are not powerful enough to account for his actions and their terrible consequences, but it is this very complexity of motivation which enables us to return again and again to the play, for each time that we read it we gain yet another insight into his character, another facet is suddenly revealed to us and each time that we do so the play takes on still more depth of meaning. At the same time, however, there must be a certain consistency of character: having given us the motivations of a character, the playwright must manage it so that this character remains steadily recognizable to us. One of our complaints about McLeod is that his motivations tend to cancel each other out so that we are never sure why he acts as he does. One more point in order to help us to understand the wellsprings of character: the playwright will sometimes attach a symbolic meaning to some feature of a character. An example of this is the sightless Teiresias in *Oedipus Rex* who knows the truth which Oedipus with his sight cannot see, and in an ironic reversal of fortune Oedipus blinds himself to keep from his sight what the blind Teiresias has revealed to him.

Because they exercise their choice on the basis of their bias—which is to say, the bent of their character—the persons in the play must inevitably come into conflict with one other, for conflict is the motor which starts and keeps the play in motion. Conflict may be of several sorts. In the plays that we will study here, we have the conflicts which arise out of

mistaken identity, as in *She Stoops to Conquer*, and there is the conflict between man and man as in *Othello* between man as he appears to be and man as he actually is as in *An Ideal Husband*, between man and his character as in *Detective Story* between man and destiny, and between man and God as in *Oedipus Rex*. In each case we see that the conflict is between an individual and a force which opposes him: this individual we call the *protagonist* though he is not necessarily the hero and the opposing force may be designated the *antagonist* though the person who embodies it is not necessarily the villain. In the simplest kind of drama, the conflict is one dimensional: that is to say the various kinds of conflict do not merge with one another so that they become inclusive of each other. But in the best drama the conflict takes on overlapping symbolic qualities. To be sure *Othello* represents a conflict between the men Othello and Iago, but their struggle is also symbolic of the conflict between appearance and reality, between good and evil, between one aspect of a man's character and another, between man and his fate, and it is by virtue of its many layers of conflict symbolized by the opposition between Othello and Iago that the play achieves its universal appeal.

Once the conflict is put in motion, the outcome of the action remains in doubt and from this uncertainty arises *suspense*. Suspense is achieved through the building up of a succession of climaxes, each more striking than the preceding one, until the climax of the play as a whole is reached when, through one final stroke of action, the meaning of the entire action is revealed to us as spectators. Thus the climax of *Oedipus Rex* occurs when Oedipus learns that he is indeed the murderer he seeks and the climax of *Othello* is reached when Othello learns the enormity of his crime in doubting Desdemona.

In ordinary melodrama suspense takes place simply because we as spectators are in ignorance of the possible consequences of the proceedings on the stage and our pleasure consists either in anticipating how it is going to come out or in the performances of our favorite actors, or both. But in serious drama suspense arises out of the conflict between what we know and what the protagonist does not know. We as spectators know that Oedipus is the murderer he seeks but he does not; we know that Iago is evil but Othello does not; we know what fall is being prepared for McLeod, but he does not, and this disparity in knowledge produces *dramatic irony*. When at last the protagonist learns through suffering what we have known at that moment which represents the lowest point in his fall, that knowledge bought through suffering restores him his humanity and nobility, and we who have vicariously

lived with him in his fearful journey learn too we sin as he sins we suffer as he suffers we are purged as he is purged and we become the better for having paid the price which he has paid. When the conflict has been unraveled, the *denouement* is reached and the forces set in motion are now set at rest in the *resolution* the balance having been restored the play ends but that restoration of balance has taken place on an emotional and ethical plane higher than that which obtained when the play began—and that is when and how we experience the meaning of the action of the play.

More than any other factor, the playwright's choice of the *style* of the dialogue sets the tone of the play as a whole. Both *Oedipus Rex* and *Othello* are expressed in the medium of poetry but the difference in the style of poetry employed in each accounts in large part for their difference in emotional effect on us. The language of *Oedipus Rex* is clear, elevated and severe, and we term it *classical* the language of *Othello* is colorful, emotional and exciting, and we term it *romantic*. The same differences in the treatment of language can be found in the plays which employ prose. The language of *An Ideal Husband* is polished urbane and witty and following Lamb, we may call it artificial the language of *She Stoops to Conquer* is human, unornamented and warm, and we may call it *sentimental* the language of *Detective Story* is hard, colloquial, and vulgar, and we may call it *naturalistic*. These designations may be applied to the style of the play as a whole, but since it has been the practice of playwrights from Marlowe to the present day to use a mixture of styles within a single play these terms are at best guides and are not to be taken and applied too literally. Of course, some plays tend toward one or the other styles more than other plays, but the modern tendency is to avoid too rigid a classification since variety enables the playwright to produce more effects than uniformity.

The playwright's approach to his materials determines whether the kind of play he writes can be classified as *tragedy* *comedy* *melodrama* or any of the other types mentioned in the famous list in *Hamlet* but since we shall have more to say concerning these genres later on, here we shall make only two points. First again since the time of Marlowe, playwrights have mixed tragedy with comedy and second, tragedy and comedy are distinguished from each other more by the author's method and attitude than by any real difference in objective. As to melodrama, this is not so much a particular type of drama as it is a symptom of failure of nerve on the part of the dramatist, a melodrama is the result of a superficial handling of a theme which deserves more serious treatment or it is a play which exploits excitement for its own sake. In any case, it represents

either the unwillingness or the inability of the playwright to deal with serious materials in a serious way. Both tragedy and comedy utilize experience to throw new light on experience in both the purgation of evil is the end aimed at—in tragedy the end being the purgation of man's arrogance and in comedy the purgation of man's vanity—with the result that man is made the better for having gone through the purgation or *catharsis*. In tragedy the spectator learns through suffering in comedy, he learns through laughter and in melodrama he has been made to cry or to laugh for the sake of tears or laughter in themselves alone.

Finally there are those elements of the drama which are connected with the physical conditions of the playhouse and with matters of stagecraft. But though these are primarily technological and technical in their nature, they have much to do with what the playwright can or cannot represent on the stage. The physical limitations of the stage and of the staging create the conditions within which the action must take place acting setting lighting costumes dancing music, *et cetera* soon circumscribe the dramatist with conventions within which and through which he must work. Thus Greek drama was an integral part of the religious observances of the Greeks. The focal point of the theatre was the central altar around which the performance proceeded. The theatre itself was an open air amphitheatre with an elevated stage and wings facing rising tiers of seats and although some stage effects were permitted they were not encouraged nor were they deemed essential. The actors were few in number, they wore high shoes to give them a larger than life effect and their faces were concealed by larger than life stylized masks in which projected their voices with power and sonority. Being thus encumbered they could not nor were they expected to move freely movement was undertaken by the chorus which stood below them and which performed its dances to the sound of music. The plays which were produced were chosen by competition and in practice the subjects were limited to the vicissitudes of fortune of a small number of heroes drawn from myth. The audience knew these tales and expected not originality of plot but depth of treatment. Scenes of horror were ordinarily not exhibited to the audience, and the plays themselves were constructed in conformity with an intricate and conventionalized arrangement of lines. All in all then the effect aimed at was that of religious awe.

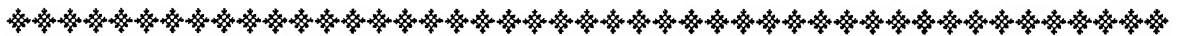
In contrast with the Greek theatre the Elizabethan theatre was a business which sold entertainment, but the audience was still small enough and uniform enough in its faith to enable the playwright to assume certain ethical convictions on its part. Like the Greek stage the Elizabethan stage stood in

the open but it was surrounded by galleries and was partly covered by a roof under which was a platform and under that a curtained recess. The platform was used when two levels of scene were required as in *Richard II* and the recess was used for certain interior scenes, as in *Othello*. A good many stage effects were created and were hugely enjoyed: there were trap doors operated from below and machines lowered from above; thunder and lightning were produced; fireworks were shot off; performing animals, acrobats and clowns enlivened the proceedings and the actors dressed themselves in their most gorgeous robes since no attempt at historical verisimilitude was made. The theatre itself being quite small in overall size and the apron of the stage extending out into the pit so that it was surrounded on three sides by the audience, a sense of intimacy between actors and audience was created. The actors played directly to the audience and did not hesitate to improve on the author's lines as Hamlet wryly complained. The audience was out for enjoyment, having crossed the river to the less savory part of the town; it let itself go; it ate nuts and fruit during the performance; it called out to the actors; it carried on affairs in curtained boxes and all in all, it had a jolly good time. Yet for all that, it was a most demanding audience and a good audience too. Since there were no curtains to be rung down or scenes to be shifted, the playwright had to rely on the imagination of his audience to see the scene in its mind's eye; his lines gave it the cue and it saw on the bare stage (bare in comparison with ours that is) the chalk cliffs of Dover more clearly than we can with our sets and painted backdrops. In effect, the dramatist embodied the stage directions in the text and when you come to read *Othello* you will see how carefully Shakespeare describes his characters, tells his actors what to do and what ges-

tures to make and informs his audience where and when the action is taking place.

We possess all the facilities of modern stagecraft and as a result rely on machinery to do the job of the imagination. We sit in an enclosed, darkened and comfortable theatre and we are separated from the action on the stage by the proscenium arch, which creates a picture frame within which the action of the play goes on. Within that frame, the scene painter, the electrician, the wardrobe mistress, the make-up artist, the stage designer and the director have all exercised their talents and their techniques: an opened tap in a kitchen sink pours real water. We go to prodigious lengths of research and cost to achieve historical verisimilitude but we buy it at the expense of the imagination. The sets get more and more cumbersome and expensive but we remain as far as ever from the seacoast of Bohemia which Shakespeare's audience at no cost but that of an effort of imagination could immediately see and accept. In a play such as *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare and his audience could roam at will throughout the length and breadth of the Roman world: we are forced to stay at home within the confines of our overburdened theatre. As costs mount a play must be a success or nothing and since the people who can afford to go to the theatre want to relax and escape from the pursuits which gave them the price of their seats, a successful play now usually means the services of a star, a Hollywood subsidy, and the rattle of the drums of publicity. Great plays demand a great audience and since ours is too polite to eat nuts and fruit too respectable to offend the actors sits decorously in its seats and believes in nothing it gets the plays it deserves.

These then are the most important elements of the drama: action, character, plot, dialogue, style, and scene.



## TRAGEDY

# Oedipus Rex

*Sophocles*

In a sense it is useless to generalize about Greek tragedy since out of the many plays we know to have been written and performed so few have come down to us.

And of these few it is ironic that we should have more extant plays by Euripides, perhaps the most difficult and least representative composer of Greek tragedy than by Aeschylus and Sophocles, whether accident or the history of taste has played this trick on us is a nice question indeed. But in the history of criticism it is the *Oedipus Rex* which has been singled out as perhaps the most perfect specimen of Greek tragedy, a tradition which owes its vitality in part at least to the influence of Aristotle's *Poetics*. The *Oedipus Rex* is the first member of the Oedipus cycle which includes the *Oedipus at Colonus* and the *Antigone*; unfortunately however the three plays were not written together as a unified trilogy and represent different plays from different tril-

ogies written at different times. It is therefore hazardous to attribute to them an intellectual consistency since Sophocles' understanding and interpretation of the myth may well have undergone considerable change.

Nevertheless we must read the *Oedipus Rex* and the *Oedipus at Colonus* as though they had been written for the same trilogy for the problem of man's relation to the gods which is posed in the *Oedipus Rex* is finally resolved in the *Oedipus at Colonus*. And in a way this problem as it is presented by Sophocles is repugnant to the modern reader who cannot help asking why if Oedipus has done everything in his power to avoid the doom of the gods why in fact if he has done everything in his power to give the state just rule even to tracking down long forgotten murderers why if he has been judged by the gods for no faults of his own but for the sins of his parents—why then must he suffer so grievously? These questions inevitably bring to mind the cries of Job and both the Hebrew answer and the Greek answer are very much alike. Whatever the gods do or God does is in the long run right.

The mind of man cannot by its very nature encompass the total design of God's scheme of creation. Man cries out at what seems to him God's injustice but in the fullness of God's wisdom these injustices are seen to be the very steps which lead man to an understanding of the ultimate goodness and wisdom of God. Thus Oedipus is punished by the gods for the sins of his parents and for his own obstinate refusal to understand the wisdom of creation but in *Oedipus at Colonus* the gods repent and crown his suffering with the balm of an apotheosis. Man and the gods are in this way reunited but this time on a deeper foundation of trust and understanding. Man has learned God's way through suffering: the rainbow which is shown to Noah is the sign of God's compassion and love.

The lesson of tragedy is therefore a hard one and in many ways it is an illogical and cruel method of instruction. But that has been the pedagogy of tragedy for over two millennia and it is worth considering that every time man thinks that he has overcome the brute in him and has forgotten his dual nature part devil part angel the beast unexpectedly emerges and tragedy has to repeat its lesson.

AN ENGLISH VERSION  
BY DUDLEY FITTS AND  
ROBERT FITZGERALD

PROLOGUE [Oedipus Suppliants Priest Creon]  
PARADOS [Chorus]  
SCENE I [Oedipus, Choragos Teiresias]  
ODE I [Chorus]  
SCENE II [Creon, Choragos Oedipus, Iocaste]  
ODE II [Chorus]

SCENE III [Iocaste Messenger Oedipus Choragos]  
ODE III [Chorus]  
SCENE IV [Oedipus Choragos Messenger  
Shepherd]  
ODE IV [Chorus]  
EXODOS [Second Messenger, Choragos Oedipus,  
Creon Antigone Ismene]

PERSONS REPRESENTED

OEDIPUS  
A PRIEST  
CREON  
TEIRESIAS  
IOCASTE  
MESSENGER  
SHEPHERD OF LAIOS  
SECOND MESSENGER  
CHORUS OF THEBAN ELDERS

THE SCENE *Before the palace of Oedipus, King of Thebes. A central door and two lateral doors open onto a platform which runs the length of the façade. On the platform right and left are altars and three steps lead down into the orchestra or chorus ground. At the beginning of the action these steps are crowded by suppliants who have brought branches and chaplets of olive leaves and who lie in various attitudes of despair. OEDIPUS enters.*

PROLOGUE

OEDIPUS

My children, generations of the living  
In the line of Kadmos nursed at his ancient  
hearth  
Why have you strewn yourselves before these  
altars  
In supplication with your boughs and garlands?  
The breath of incense rises from the city  
With a sound of prayer and lamentation

Children

I would not have you speak through messengers  
And therefore I have come myself to hear you—  
I Oedipus who bear the famous name

[To a PRIEST

You there since you are eldest in the company  
Speak for them all tell me what preys upon you  
Whether you come in dread, or crave some bless  
ing

Tell me and never doubt that I will help you  
In every way I can I should be heartless  
Were I not moved to find you suppliant here

## PRIEST

Great Oedipus O powerful King of Thebes!  
 You see how all the ages of our people  
 Cling to your altar steps here are boys  
 Who can barely stand alone, and here are priests  
 20 By weight of age as I am a priest of God  
 And young men chosen from those yet unmarried  
 As for the others all that multitude  
 They wait with olive chaplets in the squares  
 At the two shrines of Pallas and where Apollo  
 Speaks in the glowing embers

Your own eyes  
 Must tell you Thebes is in her extremity  
 And can not lift her head from the surge of death  
 A rust consumes the buds and fruits of the earth  
 30 The herds are sick children die unborn,  
 And labor is vain The god of plague and pyre  
 Raids like detestable lightning through the city,  
 And all the house of Kadmos is laid waste,  
 All emptied, and all darkened Death alone  
 Battens upon the misery of Thebes

You are not one of the immortal gods we know,  
 Yet we have come to you to make our prayer  
 As to the man of all men best in adversity  
 And wisest in the ways of God You saved us  
 From the Sphinx that flinty singer, and the tribute  
 40 We paid to her so long yet you were never  
 Better informed than we, nor could we teach you  
 It was some god breathed in you to set us free

Therefore O mighty King, we turn to you  
 Find us our safety find us a remedy  
 Whether by counsel of the gods or men  
 A king of wisdom tested in the past  
 Can act in a time of troubles and act well  
 Noblest of men restore  
 Life to your city! Think how all men call you  
 50 Liberator for your triumph long ago  
 Ah when your years of kingship are remembered,  
 Let them not say *We rose but later fell—*  
 Keep the State from going down in the storm!  
 Once years ago with happy augury  
 You brought us fortune be the same again!  
 No man questions your power to rule the land  
 But rule over men not over a dead city!  
 Ships are only hulls citadels are nothing,  
 When no life moves in the empty passageways

## OEDIPUS

60 Poor children! You may be sure I know  
 All that you longed for in your coming here  
 I know that you are deathly sick and yet,  
 Sick as you are not one is as sick as I  
 Each of you suffers in himself alone  
 His anguish, not another's but my spirit  
 Groans for the city for myself for you

I was not sleeping, you are not waking me  
 No I have been in tears for a long while  
 And in my restless thought walked many ways  
 In all my search, I found one helpful course,  
 70 And that I have taken I have sent Creon,  
 Son of Menoikeus brother of the Queen,  
 To Delphi Apollo's place of revelation  
 To learn there if he can,  
 What act or pledge of mine may save the city  
 I have counted the days, and now, this very day  
 I am troubled for he has overstayed his time  
 What is he doing? He has been gone too long  
 Yet whenever he comes back, I should do ill  
 To scant whatever hint the god may give  
 80

## PRIEST

It is a timely promise At this instant  
 They tell me Creon is here

## OEDIPUS

O Lord Apollo!  
 May his news be fair as his face is radiant!

## PRIEST

It could not be otherwise he is crowned with bay,  
 The chaplet is thick with berries

## OEDIPUS

We shall soon know  
 He is near enough to hear us now  
 [Enter CREON  
 O Prince

90 Brother son of Menoikeus  
 What answer do you bring us from the god?

## CREON

It is favorable I can tell you great afflictions  
 Will turn out well, if they are taken well

## OEDIPUS

What was the oracle? These vague words  
 Leave me still hanging between hope and fear

## CREON

Is it your pleasure to hear me with all these  
 Gathered around us? I am prepared to speak  
 But should we not go in?

## OEDIPUS

Let them all hear it  
 It is for them I suffer more than for myself  
 100

## CREON

Then I will tell you what I heard at Delphi

In plain words  
 The god commands us to expel from the land of  
 Thebes

An old defilement we are sheltering  
It is a deathly thing, beyond cure  
We must not let it feed upon us longer

OEDIPUS

What defilement? How shall we rid ourselves of it?

CREON

By exile or death, blood for blood It was  
Murder that brought the plague wind on the city

OEDIPUS

110 Murder of whom? Surely the god has named him?

CREON

My lord long ago Laios was our king  
Before you came to govern us

OEDIPUS

I know  
I learned of him from others, I never saw him

CREON

He was murdered, and Apollo commands us now  
To take revenge upon whoever killed him

OEDIPUS

Upon whom? Where are they? Where shall we  
find a clue  
To solve that crime, after so many years?

CREON

120 Here in this land, he said  
If we make enquiry,  
We may touch things that otherwise escape us

OEDIPUS

Tell me Was Laios murdered in his house  
Or in the fields, or in some foreign country?

CREON

He said he planned to make a pilgrimage  
He did not come home again

OEDIPUS

And was there no one  
No witness, no companion, to tell what happened?

CREON

They were all killed but one, and he got away  
So frightened that he could remember one thing  
only

OEDIPUS

130 What was that one thing? One may be the key  
To everything, if we resolve to use it

CREON

He said that a band of highwaymen attacked  
them  
Outnumbered them and overwhelmed the King

OEDIPUS

Strange that a highwayman should be so daring—  
Unless some faction here bribed him to do it

CREON

We thought of that But after Laios' death  
New troubles arose and we had no avenger

OEDIPUS

What troubles could prevent your hunting down  
the killers?

CREON

The riddling Sphinx's song  
Made us deaf to all mysteries but her own

140

OEDIPUS

Then once more I must bring what is dark to light  
It is most fitting that Apollo shows,  
As you do this compunction for the dead  
You shall see how I stand by you as I should  
To avenge the city and the city's god  
And not as though it were for some distant friend  
But for my own sake to be rid of evil  
Whoever killed King Laios might—who knows?—  
Decide at any moment to kill me as well  
By avenging the murdered king I protect myself

150

Come, then my children leave the altar steps  
Lift up your olive boughs!

One of you go  
And summon the people of Kadmós to gather here  
I will do all that I can you may tell them that

[Exit a PAGE

So with the help of God  
We shall be saved—or else indeed we are lost

PRIEST

Let us rise children It was for this we came,  
And now the King has promised it himself  
Phoibos has sent us an oracle may he descend  
Himself to save us and drive out the plague  
[Exeunt OEDIPUS and CREON into the palace by the central door The PRIEST and  
the SUPPLIANTS disperse R and L After a  
short pause the CHORUS enters the orchestra

160

## PARODOS

CHORUS

[STROPHE 1

What is the god singing in his profound

Delphi of gold and shadow?  
What oracle for Thebes the sunwhipped city?

Fear unjoins me the roots of my heart tremble

Now I remember O Healer your power and wonder  
Will you send doom like a sudden cloud or weave it  
Like nightfall of the past?

Ah no be merciful issue of holy sound  
Dearest to our expectancy be tender!

## [ANTISTROPHE 1]

o Let me pray to Athene the immortal daughter of Zeus  
And to Artemis her sister  
Who keeps her famous throne in the market ring  
And to Apollo Bowman at the far butts of heaven—

O gods descend! Like three streams leap against  
The fires of our grief the fires of darkness  
Be swift to bring us rest!

As in the old time from the brilliant house  
Of air you stepped to save us come again!

o Now our afflictions have no end [STROPHE 2  
Now all our stricken host lies down  
And no man fights off death with his mind,

The noble plowland bears no grain  
And groaning mothers can not bear—

See how our lives like buds take wing  
Like sparks that fly when a fire soars,  
To the shore of the god of evening

## [ANTISTROPHE 2]

The plague burns on it is pitiless  
Though pallid children laden with death  
Lie unwept in the stony ways

o And old gray women by every path  
Flock to the strand about the altars

There to strike their breasts and cry  
Worship of Phoebos in wailing prayers  
Be kind, God's golden child!

## [STROPHE 3]

There are no swords in this attack by fire  
No shields but we are ringed with cries  
Send the besieger plunging from our homes

Into the vast sea room of the Atlantic  
Or into the waves that foam eastward of Thrice—

For the day ravages what the night spares—

200

Destroy our enemy lord of the thunder!  
Let him be riven by lightning from heaven!

## [ANTISTROPHE 3]

Phoebos Apollo stretch the sun's bowstring  
That golden cord until it sing for us,  
Flashing arrows in heaven!

Artemis Huntress,  
Race with flaring lights upon our mountains!

O scarlet god O golden banded brow  
O Theban Bacchos in a storm of Maenads

## [Enter OEDIPUS C]

Whirl upon Death, that all the Undying hate!  
Come with blinding torches come in joy!

210

## SCENE I

## OEDIPUS

Is this your prayer? It may be answered Come,  
Listen to me act as the crisis demands  
And you shall have relief from all these evils

Until now I was a stranger to this tale  
As I had been a stranger to the crime  
Could I track down the murderer without a clue?  
But now friends  
As one who became a citizen after the murder  
I make this proclamation to all Thebans  
If any man knows by whose hand Laios son of Labdakos,

220

Met his death I direct that man to tell me every thing  
No matter what he fears for having so long with held it  
Let it stand as promised that no further trouble  
Will come to him, but he may leave the land in safety

Moreover If anyone knows the murderer to be foreign  
Let him not keep silent he shall have his reward from me

However if he does conceal it, if any man  
Fearing for his friend or for himself disobeys this edict

Hear what I propose to do

230

I solemnly forbid the people of this country  
Where power and throne are mine ever to receive that man  
Or speak to him, no matter who he is or let him







OEDIPUS

Say what you will Whatever you say is worthless

TEIRESIAS

I say you live in hideous shame with those  
Most dear to you You can not see the evil

OEDIPUS

It seems you can go on mouthing like this for  
ever

TEIRESIAS

370 I can if there is power in truth

OEDIPUS

There is  
But not for you not for you  
You sightless witless, senseless mad old man!

TEIRESIAS

You are the madman There is no one here  
Who will not curse you soon as you curse me

OEDIPUS

You child of endless night! You can not hurt me  
Or any other man who sees the sun

TEIRESIAS

380 True it is not from me your fate will come  
That lies within Apollo's competence,  
As it is his concern

OEDIPUS

Tell me  
Are you speaking for Creon, or for yourself?

TEIRESIAS

Creon is no threat You weave your own doom

OEDIPUS

390 Wealth, power craft of statesmanship!  
Kingly position everywhere admired!  
What savage envy is stored up against these  
If Creon, whom I trusted Creon my friend  
For this great office which the city once  
Put in my hands unsought—if for this power  
Creon desires in secret to destroy me!

He has bought this decrepit fortune-teller this  
Collector of duty pennies, this prophet fraud—  
Why, he is no more clairvoyant than I am!

Tell us

Has your mystic mummary ever approached the  
truth?

When that hellcat the Sphinx was performing here,  
What help were you to these people?

Her magic was not for the first man who came  
along

It demanded a real exorcist Your birds—  
What good were they? or the gods for the matter 40  
of that?

But I came by  
Oedipus the simple man who knows nothing—  
I thought it out for myself no birds helped me!  
And this is the man you think you can destroy,  
That you may be close to Creon when he's king!  
Well you and your friend Creon, it seems to me  
Will suffer most If you were not an old man,  
You would have paid already for your plot

CHORAGOS

We can not see that his words or yours  
Have been spoken except in anger Oedipus 410  
And of anger we have no need How can God's  
will  
Be accomplished best? That is what most concerns  
us

TEIRESIAS

You are a king But where arguments concerned  
I am your man, as much a king as you  
I am not your servant but Apollo's  
I have no need of Creon to speak for me

Listen to me You mock my blindness, do you?  
But I say that you with both your eyes, are blind  
You can not see the wretchedness of your life  
Nor in whose house you live, no, nor with whom 420  
Who are your father and mother? Can you tell  
me?

You do not even know the blind wrongs  
That you have done them, on earth and in the  
world below

But the double lash of your parents' curse will  
whip you

Out of this land some day, with only night  
Upon your precious eyes  
Your cries then—where will they not be heard?  
What fastness of Kithanon will not echo them?  
And that bridal descant of yours—you'll know it  
then

The song they sang when you came here to 430  
Thebes

And found your misguided being  
All this and more that you can not guess at now,  
Will bring you to yourself among your children

Be angry, then Curse Creon Curse my words  
I tell you, no man that walks upon the earth  
Shall be rooted out more horribly than you

OEDIPUS

Am I to bear this from him?—Damnation  
Take you! Out of this place! Out of my sight!

TEIRESIAS

I would not have come at all if you had not asked me

OEDIPUS

440 Could I have told that you'd talk nonsense that  
You'd come here to make a fool of yourself and  
of me?

TEIRESIAS

A fool? Your parents thought me sane enough

OEDIPUS

My parents again!—Wait who were my parents?

TEIRESIAS

This day will give you a father and break your heart

OEDIPUS

Your infantile riddles! You damned abracadabra!

TEIRESIAS

You were a great man once at solving riddles

OEDIPUS

Mock me with that if you like you will find it true

TEIRESIAS

It was true enough It brought about your ruin

OEDIPUS

But if it saved this town?

TEIRESIAS

[To the PAGE

450 Boy, give me your hand

OEDIPUS

Yes boy lead him away

—While you are here

We can do nothing Go leave us in peace

TEIRESIAS

I will go when I have said what I have to say  
How can you hurt me? And I tell you again  
The man you have been looking for all this time,  
The damned man the murderer of Laios  
That man is in Thebes To your mind he is foreign born,

460 But it will soon be shown that he is a Theban,  
A revelation that will fail to please

A blind man

Who has his eyes now a penniless man who is rich now

And he will go tapping the strange earth with his staff

To the children with whom he lives now he will be  
Brother and father—the very same to her  
Who bore him son and husband—the very same  
Who came to his father's bed wet with his father's blood

Enough Go think that over

If later you find error in what I have said

You may say that I have no skill in prophecy

[Exit TEIRESIAS led by his PAGE OEDIPUS  
goes into the palace

470

## ODE I

CHORUS

The Delphic stone of prophecies [STROPHE 1

Remembers ancient regicide

And a still bloody hand

That killer's hour of flight has come

He must be stronger than riderless

Cousers of untuning wind,

For the son of Zeus rimed with his father's thunder

Leaps in lightning after him,

And the Furies follow him the sad Furies

Holy Parnassos peak of snow [ANTISTROPHE 1 480

Flashes and blinds that secret man

That all shall hunt him down

Though he may roam the forest shade

Like a bull gone wild from pasture

To rage through glooms of stone

Doom comes down on him flight will not avail him

For the world's heart calls him desolate,

And the immortal Furies follow for ever follow

But now a wilder thing is heard [STROPHE 2

From the old man skilled at hearing Fate in the wing beat of a bird 490

Bewildered as a blown bud my soul hovers and can not find

Foothold in this debate or any reason or rest of mind

But no man ever brought—none can bring

Proof of strife between Thebes royal house

Labdakos line and the son of Polybos

And never until now has any man brought word

Of Laios dark death staining Oedipus the King

Divine Zeus and Apollo hold [ANTISTROPHE 2

Perfect intelligence alone of all tales ever told

And well though this diviner works he works in his own night 500

No man can judge that rough unknown or trust in second sight

For wisdom changes hands among the wise

Shall I believe my great lord criminal  
 At a raging word that a blind old man let fall?  
 I saw him when the cunning woman faced him of  
 old  
 Prove his heroic mind! These evil words are lies

## SCENE II

CREON

Men of Thebes  
 I am told that heavy accusations  
 Have been brought against me by King Oedipus

10 I am not the kind of man to bear this tamely

If in these present difficulties  
 He holds me accountable for any harm to him  
 Through anything I have said or done—why then,  
 I do not value life in this dishonor  
 It is not as though this rumor touched upon  
 Some private indiscretion. The matter is grave  
 The fact is that I am being called disloyal  
 To the State to my fellow citizens, to my friends

CHORAGOS

He may have spoken in anger not from his mind

CREON

20 But did you not hear him say I was the one  
 Who seduced the old prophet into lying?

CHORAGOS

The thing was said. I do not know how seriously

CREON

But you were watching him! Were his eyes steady?  
 Did he look like a man in his right mind?

CHORAGOS

I do not know  
 I can not judge the behavior of great men  
 But here is the King himself

[Enter OEDIPUS]

OEDIPUS

So you dared come back

30 Why? How brazen of you to come to my house  
 You murderer!

Do you think I do not know  
 That you plotted to kill me plotted to steal my  
 throne?

Tell me in God's name am I coward a fool  
 That you should dream you could accomplish this?  
 A fool who could not see your slippery game?  
 A coward not to fight back when I saw it?  
 You are the fool Creon, are you not? hoping  
 Without support or friends to get a throne?

Thrones may be won or bought you could do  
 neither

CREON

Now listen to me. You have talked, let me talk 540  
 too

You can not judge unless you know the facts

OEDIPUS

You speak well there is one fact but I find it  
 hard  
 To learn from the deadliest enemy I have

CREON

That above all I must dispute with you

OEDIPUS

That above all I will not hear you deny

CREON

If you think there is anything good in being stub-  
 born  
 Against all reason then I say you are wrong

OEDIPUS

If you think a man can sin against his own kind  
 And not be punished for it I say you are mad

CREON

I agree But tell me what have I done to you? 550

OEDIPUS

You advised me to send for that wizard, did you  
 not?

CREON

I did I should do it again

OEDIPUS

Very well Now tell me  
 How long has it been since Laios—

CREON

What of Laios?

OEDIPUS

Since he vanished in that onset by the road?

CREON

It was long ago, a long time

OEDIPUS

And this prophet  
 Was he practicing here then?

CREON

He was, and with honor, as now 560

OEDIPUS

Did he speak of me at that time?

CREON

He never did,  
At least not when I was present

OEDIPUS

But the enquiry?  
I suppose you held one?

CREON

We did but we learned nothing

OEDIPUS

Why did the prophet not speak against me then?

CREON

I do not know, and I am the kind of man  
Who holds his tongue when he has no facts to go  
on

OEDIPUS

570 There's one fact that you know, and you could  
tell it

CREON

What fact is that? If I know it, you shall have it

OEDIPUS

If he were not involved with you, he could not  
say  
That it was I who murdered Laios

CREON

If he says that, you are the one that knows it!—  
But now it is my turn to question you

OEDIPUS

Put your questions I am no murderer

CREON

First, then You married my sister?

OEDIPUS

I married your sister

CREON

And you rule the kingdom equally with her?

OEDIPUS

580 Everything that she wants she has from me

CREON

And I am the third, equal to both of you?

OEDIPUS

That is why I call you a bad friend

CREON

No Reason it out, as I have done  
Think of this first Would any sane man prefer  
Power with all a king's anxieties  
To that same power and the grace of sleep?

Certainly not I

I have never longed for the king's power—only his  
rights

Would any wise man differ from me in this?  
As matters stand I have my way in everything  
With your consent and no responsibilities  
If I were king, I should be a slave to policy

How could I desire a scepter more  
Than what is now mine—untroubled influence?  
No I have not gone mad I need no honors  
Except those with the perquisites I have now  
I am welcome everywhere every man salutes me  
And those who want your favor seek my ear,  
Since I know how to manage what they ask  
Should I exchange this ease for that anxiety?  
Besides no sober mind is treasonable  
I hate anarchy  
And never would deal with any man who likes it

Test what I have said Go to the priestess  
At Delphi ask if I quoted her correctly  
And as for this other thing if I am found  
Guilty of treason with Teiresias  
Then sentence me to death! You have my word  
It is a sentence I should cast my vote for—  
But not without evidence!

You do wrong  
When you take good men for bad bad men for  
good

A true friend thrown aside—why, life itself  
Is not more precious!

In time you will know this well  
For time, and time alone will show the just man  
Though scoundrels are discovered in a day

CHORAGOS

This is well said and a prudent man would ponder it  
Judgments too quickly formed are dangerous

OEDIPUS

But is he not quick in his duplicity?  
And shall I not be quick to parry him?  
Would you have me stand still, hold my peace  
and let  
This man win everything, through my inaction?

CREON

And you want—what is it, then? To banish me?

OEDIPUS

No, not exile It is your death I want,  
So that all the world may see what treason means

CREON

You will persist, then? You will not believe me?

OEDIPUS  
How can I believe you?

CREON  
Then you are a fool

OEDIPUS  
650 To save myself?

CREON  
In justice think of me

OEDIPUS  
You are evil incarnate

CREON  
But suppose that you are wrong?

OEDIPUS  
Still I must rule

CREON  
But not if you rule badly

OEDIPUS  
O city, city!

CREON  
It is my city too!

CHORAGOS  
Now my lords be still I see the Queen  
Iocaste coming from her palace chambers  
640 And it is time she came, for the sake of you both  
This dreadful quarrel can be resolved through her  
[Enter IOCASTE]

IOCASTE  
Poor foolish men, what wicked din is this?  
With Thebes sick to death, is it not shameful  
That you should make some private quarrel up?  
[To OEDIPUS]  
Come into the house  
—And you Creon go now  
Let us have no more of this tumult over nothing

CREON  
Nothing? No, sister what your husband plans for  
me  
Is one of two great evils exile or death

OEDIPUS  
650 He is right  
Why woman I have caught him squarely  
Plotting against my life

CREON  
No! Let me die  
Accused if ever I have wished you harm!

IOCASTE  
Ah believe it, Oedipus!

In the name of the gods, respect this oath of his  
For my sake, for the sake of these people here!

CHORAGOS [STROPHE 1  
Open your mind to her my lord Be ruled by her,  
I beg you!

OEDIPUS  
What would you have me do?

CHORAGOS  
Respect Creon's word He has never spoken like a 660  
fool  
And now he has sworn an oath

OEDIPUS  
You know what you ask?

CHORAGOS  
I do

OEDIPUS  
Speak on then

CHORAGOS  
A friend so sworn should not be baited so  
In blind malice, and without final proof

OEDIPUS  
You are aware, I hope that what you say  
Means death for me, or exile at the least

CHORAGOS [STROPHE 2  
No I swear by Helios, first in Heaven!  
May I die friendless and accursed,  
670 The worst of deaths if ever I meant that!  
It is the withering fields  
That hurt my sick heart  
Must we bear all these ills,  
And now your bad blood as well?

OEDIPUS  
Then let him go And let me die, if I must  
Or be driven by him in shame from the land of  
Thebes  
It is your unhappiness and not his talk,  
That touches me  
As for him—  
680 Wherever he is, I will hate him as long as I live

CREON  
Ugly in yielding, as you were ugly in rage!  
Natures like yours chiefly torment themselves

OEDIPUS  
Can you not go? Can you not leave me?

CREON  
I can  
You do not know me but the city knows me,  
And in its eyes I am just, if not in yours  
[Exit CREON]



CHORAGOS [ANTISTROPHE 1  
Lady Iocaste did you not ask the King to go to his  
chambers?

IOCASTE  
First tell me what has happened

CHORAGOS  
690 There was suspicion without evidence yet it  
rankled  
As even false charges will

IOCASTE  
On both sides?

CHORAGOS  
On both  
IOCASTE  
But what was said?

CHORAGOS  
Oh let it rest, let it be done with!  
Have we not suffered enough?

OEDIPUS  
You see to what your decency has brought you  
You have made difficulties where my heart saw  
none

CHORAGOS [ANTISTROPHE 2  
700 Oedipus it is not once only I have told you—  
You must know I should count myself unwise  
To the point of madness should I now forsake  
you—  
You under whose hand  
In the storm of another time  
Our dear land sailed out free  
But now stand fast at the helm!

IOCASTE  
In God's name Oedipus, inform your wife as well  
Why are you so set in this hard anger?

OEDIPUS  
710 I will tell you for none of these men deserves  
My confidence as you do It is Creon's work,  
His treachery his plotting against me

IOCASTE  
Go on if you can make this clear to me

OEDIPUS  
He charges me with the murder of Laios

IOCASTE  
Has he some knowledge? Or does he speak from  
hearsay?

OEDIPUS  
He would not commit himself to such a charge,

But he has brought in that damnable soothsayer  
To tell his story

IOCASTE  
Set your mind at rest  
If it is a question of soothsayers I tell you  
That you will find no man whose craft gives  
knowledge  
Of the unknowable

720

Here is my proof

An oracle was reported to Laios once  
(I will not say from Phoebos himself but from  
His appointed ministers at any rate)  
That his doom would be death at the hands of his  
own son—  
His son born of his flesh and of mine!

Now you remember the story Laios was killed  
By marauding strangers where three highways  
meet  
But his child had not been three days in this  
world  
Before the King had pierced the baby's ankles  
And left him to die on a lonely mountainside

730

Thus Apollo never crused that child  
To kill his father and it was not Laios' fate  
To die at the hands of his son as he had feared  
This is what prophets and prophecies are worth!  
Have no dread of them

It is God himself  
Who can show us what he wills in his own way

OEDIPUS  
How strange a shadowy memory crossed my mind  
Just now while you were speaking it chilled my  
heart

740

IOCASTE  
What do you mean? what memory do you speak  
of?

OEDIPUS  
If I understand you Laios was killed  
At a place where three roads meet

IOCASTE  
So it was said  
We have no later story

OEDIPUS  
Where did it happen?

IOCASTE  
Phokis it is called at a place where the Theban  
Way  
Divides into the roads toward Delphi and Daulia

OEDIPUS

When?

IOCASTE

750 We had the news not long before you came  
And proved the right to your succession here

OEDIPUS

Ah, what net has God been weaving for me?

IOCASTE

Oedipus! Why does this trouble you?

OEDIPUS

Do not ask me yet  
First, tell me how Laios looked, and tell me  
How old he was

IOCASTE

He was tall his hair just touched  
With white his form was not unlike your own

OEDIPUS

760 I think that I myself may be accurst  
By my own ignorant edict

IOCASTE

You speak strangely  
It makes me tremble to look at you my King

OEDIPUS

I am not sure that the blind man can not see  
But I should know better if you were to tell me—

IOCASTE

Anything—though I dread to hear you ask it

OEDIPUS

Was the King lightly escorted or did he ride  
With a large company as a ruler should?

IOCASTE

There were five men with him in all one was a  
herald  
And a single chariot, which he was driving

OEDIPUS

770 Alas that makes it plain enough! But who—  
Who told you how it happened?

IOCASTE

A household servant,  
The only one to escape

OEDIPUS

And is he still  
A servant of ours?

IOCASTE

No for when he came back at  
last  
And found you enthroned in the place of the  
dead king

He came to me touched my hand with his, and  
begged

That I would send him away to the frontier district 780  
Where only the shepherds go—

As far away from the city as I could send him  
I granted his prayer for although the man was a  
slave

He had earned more than this favor at my hands

OEDIPUS

Can he be called back quickly?

IOCASTE

Easily  
But why?

OEDIPUS

I have taken too much upon myself  
Without enquiry therefore I wish to consult him

IOCASTE

Then he shall come 790  
But am I not one also  
To whom you might confide these fears of yours?

OEDIPUS

That is your right it will not be denied you,  
Now least of all for I have reached a pitch  
Of wild foreboding Is there anyone  
To whom I should sooner speak?

Polybos of Corinth is my father  
My mother is a Dorian Merope  
I grew up chief among the men of Corinth  
Until a strange thing happened— 800  
Not worth my passion it may be but strange

At a feast, a drunken man maundering in his cups  
Cries out that I am not my father's son!

I contained myself that night though I felt anger  
And a sinking heart The next day I visited  
My father and mother and questioned them  
They stormed

Calling it all the slanderous rant of a fool  
And this relieved me Yet the suspicion  
Remained always aching in my mind 810  
I knew there was talk, I could not rest  
And finally saying nothing to my parents  
I went to the shrine at Delphi  
The god dismissed my question without reply  
He spoke of other things

Some were clear,

Full of wretchedness dreadful unbearable  
 As, that I should lie with my own mother breed  
 Children from whom all men would turn their eyes,  
 And that I should be my father's murderer

820 I heard all this, and fled And from that day  
 Count to me was only in the stars  
 Descending in that quarter of the sky,  
 As I wandered farther and farther on my way  
 To a land where I should never see the evil  
 Sung by the oracle And I came to this country  
 Where so you say King Laios was killed

I will tell you all that happened there, my lady

There were three highways  
 Coming together at a place I passed  
 830 And there a herald came towards me and a chariot  
 Drawn by horses, with a man such as you describe  
 Seated in it The groom leading the horses  
 Forced me off the road at his lord's command  
 But as this charioteer lurched over towards me  
 I struck him in my rage The old man saw me  
 And brought his double goad down upon my head  
 As I came abreast

He was paid back, and more!  
 Swinging my club in this right hand I knocked  
 him

840 Out of his car, and he rolled on the ground  
 I killed him

I killed them all  
 Now if that stranger and Laios were—kin,  
 Where is a man more miserable than I?  
 More hated by the gods? Citizen and alien alike  
 Must never shelter me or speak to me—  
 I must be shunned by all

And I myself  
 Pronounced this malediction upon myself!

850 Think of it I have touched you with these hands  
 These hands that killed your husband What  
 defilement!

Am I all evil then? It must be so  
 Since I must flee from Thebes, yet never again  
 See my own countrymen, my own country,  
 For fear of joining my mother in marriage  
 And killing Polybos, my father

Ah,  
 If I was created so, born to this fate  
 Who could deny the savagery of God?

860 O holy majesty of heavenly powers!  
 May I never see that day! Never!  
 Rather let me vanish from the race of men  
 Than know the abomination destined me!

CHORAGOS

We too my lord, have felt dismay at this  
 But there is hope you have yet to hear the shepherd

OEDIPUS

Indeed, I fear no other hope is left me

IOCASTE

What do you hope from him when he comes?

OEDIPUS

This much  
 If his account of the murder tallies with yours,  
 Then I am cleared

IOCASTE

What was it that I said  
 Of such importance?

OEDIPUS

Why, marauders you said  
 Killed the King according to this man's story  
 If he maintains that still if there were several  
 Clearly the guilt is not mine I was alone  
 But if he says one man singlehanded did it  
 Then the evidence all points to me

IOCASTE

You may be sure that he said there were several  
 And can he call back that story now? He can not  
 The whole city heard it as plainly as I  
 But suppose he alters some detail of it  
 He can not ever show that Laios' death  
 Fulfilled the oracle for Apollo said  
 My child was doomed to kill him and my child—  
 Poor baby!—it was my child that died first

No From now on, where oracles are concerned,  
 I would not waste a second thought on any

OEDIPUS

You may be right

But come let someone go  
 For the shepherd at once This matter must be  
 settled

IOCASTE

I will send for him  
 I would not wish to cross you in anything,  
 And surely not in this—Let us go in  
 [Exeunt into the palace]

## ODE II

CHORUS

[STROPHE 1]

Let me be reverent in the ways of light  
 Lowly the paths I journey on,

Let all my words and actions keep  
 The laws of the pure universe  
 From highest Heaven handed down  
 For Heaven is their bright nurse  
 Those generations of the realms of light  
 900 Ah never of mortal kind were they begot  
 Nor are they slaves of memory, lost in sleep  
 Their Father is greater than Time and ages not

The tyrant is a child of Pride [ANTISTROPHE I  
 Who drinks from his great sickening cup  
 Recklessness and vanity,  
 Until from his high crest headlong  
 He plummets to the dust of hope  
 That strong man is not strong  
 But let no fair ambition be denied  
 910 May God protect the wrestler for the State  
 In government in comely policy  
 Who will fear God and on His ordinance wait

[STROPHE 2  
 Haughtiness and the high hand of disdain  
 Tempt and outrage God's holy law  
 And any mortal who dares hold  
 No immortal Power in awe  
 Will be caught up in a net of pain  
 The price for which his levity is sold  
 Let each man take due earnings then  
 920 And keep his hands from holy things,  
 And from blasphemy stand apart—  
 Else the crackling blast of heaven  
 Blows on his head, and on his desperate heart  
 Though fools will honor impious men,  
 In their cities no tragic poet sings

[ANTISTROPHE 2  
 Shall we lose faith in Delphi's obscurities,  
 We who have heard the world's core  
 Discredited, and the sacred wood  
 Of Zeus at Elis praised no more?  
 930 The deeds and the strange prophecies  
 Must make a pattern yet to be understood  
 Zeus, if indeed you are lord of all  
 Throned in light over night and day  
 Mirror this in your endless mind  
 Our masters call the oracle  
 Words on the wind and the Delphic vision blind!  
 Their hearts no longer know Apollo,  
 And reverence for the gods has died away

## SCENE III

[Enter IOCASTE

IOCASTE

Princes of Thebes, it has occurred to me  
 940 To visit the altars of the gods, bearing  
 These branches as a suppliant, and this incense

Our King is not himself his noble soul  
 Is overwrought with fantasies of dread  
 Else he would consider  
 The new prophecies in the light of the old  
 He will listen to any voice that speaks disaster  
 And my advice goes for nothing

[She approaches the altar R

To you, then Apollo  
 Lycean lord, since you are nearest I turn in prayer  
 Receive these offerings and grant us deliverance  
 950 From defilement Our hearts are heavy with fear  
 When we see our leader distracted as helpless  
 sailors

Are terrified by the confusion of their helmsman  
 [Enter MESSENGER

MESSENGER

Friends no doubt you can direct me  
 Where shall I find the house of Oedipus  
 Or, better still, where is the King himself?

CHORAGOS

It is this very place stranger he is inside  
 This is his wife and mother of his children

MESSENGER

I wish her happiness in a happy house  
 Blest in all the fulfillment of her marriage

IOCASTE

I wish as much for you your courtesy  
 Deserves a like good fortune But now tell me  
 Why have you come? What have you to say to us?

MESSENGER

Good news my lady, for your house and your  
 husband

IOCASTE

What news? Who sent you here?

MESSENGER

I am from Corinth  
 The news I bring ought to mean joy for you,  
 Though it may be you will find some grief in it

IOCASTE

What is it? How can it touch us in both ways?

MESSENGER

The word is that the people of the Isthmus  
 970 Intend to call Oedipus to be their king

IOCASTE

But old King Polybos—is he not reigning still?

MESSENGER

No Death holds him in his sepulchre

IOCASTE

What are you saying? Polybos is dead?

MESSENGER

If I am not telling the truth may I die myself

IOCASTE

[To a MAIDSERVANT

Go in go quickly tell this to your master

O riddlers of God's will where are you now!  
This was the man whom Oedipus long ago  
Feared so fled so in dread of destroying him—  
But it was another fate by which he died

[Enter OEDIPUS C

OEDIPUS

Dearest Iocaste why have you sent for me?

IOCASTE

Listen to what this man says, and then tell me  
What has become of the solemn prophecies

OEDIPUS

Who is this man? What is his news for me?

IOCASTE

He has come from Corinth to announce your  
father's death!

OEDIPUS

Is it true stranger? Tell me in your own words

MESSENGER

I can not say it more clearly the King is dead

OEDIPUS

Was it by treason? Or by an attack of illness?

MESSENGER

A little thing brings old men to their rest

OEDIPUS

990 It was sickness then?

MESSENGER

Yes, and his many years

OEDIPUS

Ah!

Why should a man respect the Pythian hearth or  
Give heed to the birds that jangle above his head?  
They prophesied that I should kill Polybos  
Kill my own father but he is dead and buried,  
And I am here—I never touched him never,  
Unless he died of grief for my departure  
And thus, in a sense through me No Polybos  
Has packed the oracles off with him underground  
They are empty words

1000

IOCASTE

Had I not told you so?

OEDIPUS

You had it was my faint heart that betrayed me

IOCASTE

From now on never think of those things again

OEDIPUS

And yet—must I not fear my mother's bed?

IOCASTE

Why should anyone in this world be afraid  
Since Fate rules us and nothing can be foreseen?  
A man should live only for the present day

Have no more fear of sleeping with your mother  
How many men in dreams have lain with their  
mothers!

1010

No reasonable man is troubled by such things

OEDIPUS

That is true only—  
If only my mother were not still alive!  
But she is alive I can not help my dread

IOCASTE

Yet this news of your father's death is wonderful

OEDIPUS

Wonderful But I fear the living woman

MESSENGER

Tell me, who is this woman that you fear?

OEDIPUS

It is Merope, man the wife of King Polybos

MESSENGER

Merope? Why should you be afraid of her?

OEDIPUS

An oracle of the gods, a dreadful saying

1020

MESSENGER

Can you tell me about it or are you sworn to  
silence?

OEDIPUS

I can tell you and I will  
Apollo said through his prophet that I was the man  
Who should marry his own mother shed his  
father's blood  
With his own hands And so for all these years  
I have kept clear of Corinth and no harm has  
come—  
Though it would have been sweet to see my  
parents again

MESSENGER

And is this the fear that drove you out of Corinth?

OEDIPUS

Would you have me kill my father?

MESSENGER

1030 You must be reassured by the news I gave you

OEDIPUS

If you could reassure me I would reward you

MESSENGER

I had that in mind I will confess I thought  
I could count on you when you returned to  
Corinth

OEDIPUS

No I will never go near my parents again

MESSENGER

Ah son you still do not know what you are doing—

OEDIPUS

What do you mean? In the name of God tell me!

MESSENGER

—If these are your reasons for not going home

OEDIPUS

I tell you I fear the oracle may come true

MESSENGER

And guilt may come upon you through your parents?

OEDIPUS

1040 That is the dread that is always in my heart

MESSENGER

Can you not see that all your fears are groundless?

OEDIPUS

How can you say that? They are my parents  
surely?

MESSENGER

Polybos was not your father

OEDIPUS

Not my father?

MESSENGER

No more your father than the man speaking to you

OEDIPUS

But you are nothing to me!

MESSENGER

Neither was he

OEDIPUS

Then why did he call me son?

MESSENGER

I will tell you  
Long ago he had you from my hands as a gift 1050

OEDIPUS

Then how could he love me so if I was not his?

MESSENGER

He had no children and his heart turned to you

OEDIPUS

What of you? Did you buy me? Did you find me  
by chance?

MESSENGER

I came upon you in the crooked pass of Kithanon

OEDIPUS

And what were you doing there?

MESSENGER

Tending my flocks

OEDIPUS

A wandering shepherd?

MESSENGER

But your savior son, that day

OEDIPUS

From what did you save me?

MESSENGER

Your ankles should tell you that 1060

OEDIPUS

Ah stranger, why do you speak of that childhood  
pain?

MESSENGER

I cut the bonds that tied your ankles together

OEDIPUS

I have had the mark as long as I can remember

MESSENGER

That was why you were given the name you bear

OEDIPUS

God! Was it my father or my mother who did it?  
Tell me!

MESSENGER

I do not know The man who gave you to me  
Can tell you better than I

OEDIPUS

It was not you that found me, but another?

MESSENGER

1070 It was another shepherd gave you to me

OEDIPUS

Who was he? Can you tell me who he was?

MESSENGER

I think he was said to be one of Laios' people

OEDIPUS

You mean the Laios who was king here years ago?

MESSENGER

Yes King Laios, and the man was one of his  
herdsmen

OEDIPUS

Is he still alive? Can I see him?

MESSENGER

These men here

Know best about such things

OEDIPUS

Does anyone here

Know this shepherd that he is talking about?

1080 Have you seen him in the fields or in the town?

If you have tell me It is time things were made  
plain

CHORAGOS

I think the man he means is that same shepherd  
You have already asked to see Iocastê perhaps  
Could tell you something

OEDIPUS

Do you know anything

About him, Lady? Is he the man we have sum-  
moned?

Is that the man this shepherd means?

IOCASTE

Why think of him?

Forget this herdsman Forget it all

1090 This talk is a waste of time

OEDIPUS

How can you say that

When the clues to my true birth are in my hands?

IOCASTE

For God's love, let us have no more questioning!  
Is your life nothing to you?

My own is pain enough for me to bear

OEDIPUS

You need not worry Suppose my mother a slave,

And born of slaves no baseness can touch you

IOCASTE

Listen to me, I beg you do not do this thing!

OEDIPUS

I will not listen the truth must be made known

IOCASTE

Everything that I say is for your own good!

1100

OEDIPUS

My own good

Snaps my patience, then, I want none of it

IOCASTE

You are fatally wrong! May you never learn who  
you are!

OEDIPUS

Go one of you and bring the shepherd here  
Let us leave this woman to brag of her royal name

IOCASTE

Ah miserable!

That is the only word I have for you now

That is the only word I can ever have

[Exit into the palace]

CHORAGOS

Why has she left us Oedipus? Why has she gone  
In such a passion of sorrow? I fear this silence  
Something dreadful may come of it

1110

OEDIPUS

Let it come!

However base my birth I must know about it  
The Queen like a woman, is perhaps ashamed  
To think of my low origin But I  
Am a child of Luck I can not be dishonored  
Luck is my mother, the passing months my  
brothers

Have seen me rich and poor

If this is so,

How could I wish that I were someone else?

1120

How could I not be glad to know my birth?

## ODE III

CHORUS

If ever the coming time were known [STROPHE  
To my heart's pondering,  
Kithaion now by Heaven I see the torches  
At the festival of the next full moon  
And see the dance and hear the choir sing  
A grace to your gentle shade  
Mountain where Oedipus was found  
O mountain guard of a noble race!



1130 May the god who heals us lend his aid  
And let that glory come to pass  
For our king's cradling ground

[ANTISTROPHE

Of the nymphs that flower beyond the years  
Who bore you, royal child  
To Pan of the hills on the timberline Apollo  
Cold in delight where the upland cleaves  
Or Hermes for whom Kyllene's heights are piled?  
Or flushed as evening cloud  
Great Dionysos roamer of mountains,  
1140 He—was it he who found you there,  
And caught you up in his own proud  
Arms from the sweet god-ravisher  
Who laughed by the Muses' fountains?

#### SCENE IV

OEDIPUS

Since though I do not know the man,  
I think I see him coming: this shepherd we want  
He is old like our friend here and the men  
Bringing him seem to be servants of my house  
But you can tell if you have ever seen him  
[Enter SHEPHERD escorted by servants

CHORAGOS

I know him: he was Laios' man. You can trust him.

1150 OEDIPUS

Tell me first: you from Corinth—is this the shepherd  
We were discussing?

MESSENGER

This is the very man.

OEDIPUS

[To SHEPHERD

Come here. No look at me. You must answer  
Everything I ask—You belonged to Laios?

SHEPHERD

Yes, born his slave, brought up in his house.

OEDIPUS

Tell me: what kind of work did you do for him?

SHEPHERD

I was a shepherd of his, most of my life.

OEDIPUS

Where mainly did you go for pasturage?

SHEPHERD

Sometimes Kithairon, sometimes the hills near-by.

OEDIPUS

Do you remember ever seeing this man out there? 1161

SHEPHERD

What would he be doing there? This man?

OEDIPUS

This man standing here: Have you ever seen him  
before?

SHEPHERD

No. At least not to my recollection.

MESSENGER

And that is not strange, my lord. But I'll refresh  
His memory: he must remember when we two  
Spent three whole seasons together, March to  
September.

On Kithairon or thereabouts. He had two flocks.  
I had one. Each autumn I'd drive mine home.  
And he would go back with his to Laios' sheep-  
fold—

Is this not true, just as I have described it? 1170

SHEPHERD

True, yes, but it was all so long ago.

MESSENGER

Well, then, do you remember back in those days  
That you gave me a baby boy to bring up as my  
own?

SHEPHERD

What if I did? What are you trying to say?

MESSENGER

King Oedipus was once that little child.

SHEPHERD

Damn you, hold your tongue!

OEDIPUS

No more of that!  
It is your tongue needs watching, not this man's.

SHEPHERD

My King, my Master, what is it I have done  
wrong?

OEDIPUS

You have not answered his question about the boy. 1180

SHEPHERD

He does not know. He is only making  
trouble.

OEDIPUS

Come, speak plainly, or it will go hard with you.

SHEPHERD

In God's name do not torture an old man!

OEDIPUS

Come here one of you bind his arms behind him

SHEPHERD

Unhappy king! What more do you wish to learn?

OEDIPUS

Did you give this man the child he speaks of?

SHEPHERD

I did

And I would to God I had died that very day

OEDIPUS

You will die now unless you speak the truth

SHEPHERD

1190 Yet if I speak the truth, I am worse than dead

OEDIPUS

Very well since you insist upon delaying—

SHEPHERD

No! I have told you already that I gave him the boy

OEDIPUS

Where did you get him? From your house? From somewhere else?

SHEPHERD

Not from mine no A man gave him to me

OEDIPUS

Is that man here? Do you know whose slave he was?

SHEPHERD

For God's love my King do not ask me any more!

OEDIPUS

You are a dead man if I have to ask you again

SHEPHERD

Then        Then the child was from the palace of  
Laios

OEDIPUS

A slave child? or a child of his own line?

SHEPHERD

1200 Ah, I am on the brink of dreadful speech!

OEDIPUS

And I of dreadful hearing Yet I must hear

SHEPHERD

If you must be told then

They said it was Laios' child

But it is your wife who can tell you about that

OEDIPUS

My wife!—Did she give it to you?

SHEPHERD

My lord, she did

OEDIPUS

Do you know why?

SHEPHERD

I was told to get rid of it

OEDIPUS

An unspeakable mother!

SHEPHERD

There had been prophecies

OEDIPUS

Tell me

SHEPHERD

It was said that the boy would kill his own father

OEDIPUS

Then why did you give him over to this old man?

SHEPHERD

I pitied the baby my King  
And I thought that this man would take him far  
away  
To his own country

He saved him—but for what a fate!

For if you see what this man says you are  
No man living is more wretched than Oedipus

OEDIPUS

Ah God!  
It was true!

All the prophecies!

—Now

O Light may I look on you for the last time!

I Oedipus

Oedipus damned in his birth, in his marriage  
damned,

Damned in the blood he shed with his own hand!  
[He rushes into the palace]

## ODE IV

CHORUS

Alas for the seed of men

[STROPHES 1

What measure shall I give these generations  
That breathe on the void and are void  
And exist and do not exist?

Who bears more weight of joy  
Than mass of sunlight shifting in images,  
O! who shall make his thought stay on  
That down time drifts away?

Your splendor is all fallen

O naked brow of wrath and tears,  
O change of Oedipus!  
I who saw your days call no man blest—  
Your great days like ghosts gone

That mind was a strong bow [ANTISTROPHE 1]

Deep how deep you drew it then, hard archer  
At a dim fearful range  
And brought dear glory down!

You overcame the stinger—  
The virgin with her hooking lion claws—  
And though death sang stood like a tower  
To make pale Thebes take heart

Fortress against our sorrow!

Divine king giver of laws  
Majestic Oedipus!  
No prince in Thebes had ever such renown  
No prince won such grace of power

And now of all men ever known [STROPHE 2]  
Most pitiful is this man's story  
His fortunes are most changed his state  
Fallen to a low slave's  
Ground under bitter fate

O Oedipus most royal one!  
The great doom that expelled you to the light  
Gave at night—ah, gave night to your glory  
As to the father to the fathering son

All understood too late

How could that queen whom Laios won  
The garden that he harrowed at his height  
Be silent when that act was done?

But all eyes fail before time's eye [ANTISTROPHE 2]  
All actions come to justice there  
Though never willed though far down the deep  
past  
Your bed your dread stirrings,  
Are brought to book at last

Child by Laios doomed to die  
Then doomed to lose that fortunate little death  
Would God you never took breath in this air  
That with my wailing lips I take to cry

For I weep the world's outcast

I was blind and now I can tell why  
Asleep for you had given ease of breath  
To Thebes while the false years went by

## EXODOS

[Enter from the palace SECOND MESSENGER]

SECOND MESSENGER

Elders of Thebes most honored in this land,  
What horrors are yours to see and hear what weight  
Of sorrow to be endured if true to your birth  
You venerate the line of Labdakos!  
I think neither Istios nor Phasis those great rivers  
Could purify this place of the corruption  
It shelters now or soon must bring to light—  
Evil not done unconsciously but willed

The greatest griefs are those we cause ourselves

CHORAGOS

Surely friend we have grief enough already,  
What new sorrow do you mean?

SECOND MESSENGER

The Queen is dead

CHORAGOS

Iocaste? Dead? But at whose hand?

SECOND MESSENGER

Her own  
The full horror of what happened you can not  
know  
For you did not see it, but I, who did will tell you  
As clearly as I can how she met her death

When she had left us,  
In passionate silence passing through the court  
She ran to her apartment in the house  
Her hand clutched by the fingers of both hands  
She closed the doors behind her then by that bed  
Where long ago the fatal son was conceived—  
That son who should bring about his father's  
death—  
We heard her call upon Laios dead so many years  
And heard her wail for the double fruit of her  
marriage  
A husband by her husband children by her child

Exactly how she died I do not know  
For Oedipus burst in moaning and would not  
let us

Keep vigil to the end it was by him  
As he stormed about the room that our eyes were  
caught

1310 From one to another of us he went begging a  
sword

Cursing the wife who was not his wife, the mother  
Whose womb had carried his own children and  
himself

I do not know it was none of us aided him  
But surely one of the gods was in control!

For with a dreadful cry  
He hurled his weight as though wrenched out of  
himself

At the twin doors the bolts gave and he rushed  
in

And there we saw her hanging her body swaying  
From the cruel cord she had noosed about her  
neck

1320 A great sob broke from him heartbreaking to hear,  
As he loosed the rope and lowered her to the  
ground

I would blot out from my mind what happened  
next!

For the King ripped from her gown the golden  
brooches

That were her ornament and raised them and  
plunged them down

Straight into his own eyeballs crying, No more  
No more shall you look on the misery about me,  
The horrors of my own doing! Too long you have  
known

The faces of those whom I should never have seen,  
Too long been blind to those for whom I was  
searching!

1330 From this hour, go in darkness! And as he spoke,  
He struck at his eyes—not once but many times  
And the blood spattered his beard,  
Bursting from his ruined sockets like red hail

So from the unhappiness of two this evil has  
sprung,

A curse on the man and woman alike The old  
Happiness of the house of Labdakos

Was happiness enough where is it today?  
It is all wailing and ruin disgrace death—all  
The misery of mankind that has a name—

1340 And it is wholly and for ever theirs

CHORAGOS

Is he in agony still? Is there no rest for him?

SECOND MESSENGER

He is calling for someone to lead him to the gates

So that all the children of Kadmos may look upon  
His father's murderer his mother's—no  
I can not say it!

And then he will leave Thebes,  
Self exiled in order that the curse  
Which he himself pronounced may depart from  
the house

He is weak and there is none to lead him  
So terrible is his suffering

But you will see  
Look the doors are opening in a moment  
You will see a thing that would crush a heart of  
stone

[The central door is opened OEDIPUS  
blinded is led in

CHORAGOS

Dreadful indeed for men to see  
Never have my own eyes  
Looked on a sight so full of fear

Oedipus!  
What madness came upon you what daemon  
Leaped on your life with heavier  
Punishment than a mortal man can bear?  
No I can not even  
Look at you poor ruined one  
And I would speak question ponder,  
If I were able No  
You make me shudder

OEDIPUS

God God  
Is there a sorrow greater?  
Where shall I find harbor in this world?  
My voice is hushed far on a dark wind  
What has God done to me?

CHORAGOS

Too terrible to think of, or to see

OEDIPUS

O cloud of night, [STROPHE 1  
Never to be turned away night coming on,  
I can not tell how night like a shroud!  
My fair winds brought me here

O God Again  
The pain of the spikes where I had sight  
The flooding pain  
Of memory never to be gouged out

CHORAGOS

This is not strange  
You suffer it all twice over, remorse in pain  
Pain in remorse

OEDIPUS

Ah dear friend [ANTISTROPHE 1

Are you faithful even yet you alone?  
Are you still standing near me will you stay here  
Patient, to care for the blind?

The blind man!

Yet even blind I know who it is attends me  
By the voice's tone—  
Though my new darkness hide the comforter

1390

CHORAGOS

Oh fearful act!  
What god was it drove you to take black  
Night across your eyes?

OEDIPUS

Apollo Apollo Dear [STROPHE 2  
Children the god was Apollo  
He brought my sick sick fate upon me  
But the blinding hand was my own!  
How could I bear to see  
When all my sight was horror everywhere?

CHORAGOS

1400

Everywhere, that is true

OEDIPUS

And now what is left?  
Images? Love? A greeting even,  
Sweet to the senses? Is there anything?  
Ah, no friends lead me away  
Lead me away from Thebes  
Lead the great wick  
And hell of Oedipus whom the gods hate

CHORAGOS

Your fate is clear you are not blind to that  
Would God you had never found it out!

OEDIPUS

[ANTISTROPHE 2

1410

Death take the man who unbound  
My feet on that hillside  
And delivered me from death to life! What life?  
If only I had died  
This weight of monstrous doom  
Could not have dragged me and my darlings  
down

CHORAGOS

I would have wished the same

OEDIPUS

Oh never to have come here  
With my father's blood upon me! Never  
To have been the man they call his mother's hus-  
band!  
Oh accursed! Oh child of evil  
To have entered that wretched bed—  
the selfsame one!  
More primal than sin itself this fell to me

1420

CHORAGOS

I do not know how I can answer you  
You were better dead than alive and blind

OEDIPUS

Do not counsel me any more This punishment  
That I have laid upon myself is just  
If I had eyes,  
I do not know how I could bear the sight  
Of my father, when I came to the house of Death 1430  
Or my mother for I have sinned against them  
both  
So vilely that I could not make my peace  
By strangling my own life  
Or do you think my children  
Born as they were born would be sweet to my  
eyes?  
Ah never never! Nor this town with its high walls,  
Nor the holy images of the gods

For I

Thrice miserable!—Oedipus noblest of all the  
line  
Of Kadmos have condemned myself to enjoy 1440  
These things no more by my own malediction  
Expelling that man whom the gods declared  
To be a defilement in the house of Laios  
After exposing the rankness of my own guilt,  
How could I look men frankly in the eyes?  
No I swear it  
If I could have stifled my hearing at its source  
I would have done it and made all this body  
A tight cell of misery blank to light and sound  
So I should have been safe in a dark agony 1450  
Beyond all recollection

Ah Kithairon!

Why did you shelter me? When I was cast upon  
you  
Why did I not die? Then I should never  
Have shown the world my execrable birth

Ah Polybos! Corinth, city that I believed  
The ancient seat of my ancestors how fair  
I seemed, your child! And all the while this evil  
Was cancerous within me!

For I am sick

In my daily life sick in my origin 1460

O three roads, dark ravine, woodland and way  
Where three roads met you, drinking my father's  
blood  
My own blood spilled by my own hand can you  
remember  
The unspeakable things I did there, and the things  
I went on from there to do?

O marriage marriage!

The act that engendered me and again the act

1470 Perfo med by the son in the same bed—  
 Ah the net  
 Of incest mingling fathers brothers sons  
 With brides wives mothers the last evil  
 That can be known by men no tongue can say  
 How evil!

No For the love of God conceal me  
 Somewhere far from Thebes or kill me or hurl  
 me  
 Into the sea away from men's eyes for ever

Come lead me You need not fear to touch me  
 Of all men I alone can bear this guilt  
 [Enter CREON

CHORAGOS

1480 We are not the ones to decide but Creon here  
 May fitly judge of what you ask He only  
 Is left to protect the city in your place

OEDIPUS

Alas how can I speak to him? What right have I  
 To beg his courtesy whom I have deeply wronged?

CREON

I have not come to mock you Oedipus,  
 Or to reproach you, either  
 [To ATTENDANTS  
 —You standing there

1490 If you have lost all respect for man's dignity,  
 At least respect the flame of Lord Helios  
 Do not allow this pollution to show itself  
 Openly here an affront to the earth  
 And Heaven's lam and the light of day No, take  
 him  
 Into the house as quickly as you can  
 For it is proper  
 That only the close kindred see his grief

OEDIPUS

I pray you in God's name since your courtesy  
 Ignores my dark expectation visiting  
 With mercy this man of all men most execrable  
 Give me what I ask—for your good not for mine

CREON

1500 And what is it that you would have me do?

OEDIPUS

Drive me out of this country as quickly as may be  
 To a place where no human voice can ever greet  
 me

CREON

I should have done that before now—only  
 God's will had not been wholly revealed to me

OEDIPUS

But his command is plain the parricide  
 Must be destroyed I am that evil man

CREON

That is the sense of it yes, but as things are  
 We had best discover clearly what is to be done

OEDIPUS

You would learn more about a man like me?

CREON

You are ready now to listen to the god

OEDIPUS

I will listen But it is to you  
 That I must turn for help I beg you, hear me

The woman in there—  
 Give her whatever funeral you think proper  
 She is your sister

—But let me go Creon!

Let me purge my father's Thebes of the pollution  
 Of my living here and go out to the wild hills  
 To Kithumon that has won such fame with me  
 The tomb my mother and father appointed for me  
 And let me die there as they willed I should  
 And yet I know  
 Death will not ever come to me through sickness  
 Or in any natural way I have been preserved  
 For some unthinkable fate But let that be

As for my sons you need not care for them  
 They are men they will find some way to live  
 But my poor daughters, who have shared my  
 table  
 Who never before have been parted from their  
 father—

Take care of them Creon do this for me  
 And will you let me touch them with my hands  
 A last time and let us weep together?  
 Be kind, my lord  
 Great prince be kind!

Could I but touch them

They would be mine again, as when I had my  
 eyes

[Enter ANTIGONE and ISMENE attended

Ah God!  
 Is it my dearest children I hear weeping?  
 Has Creon pitied me and sent my daughters?

CREON

Yes Oedipus I knew that they were dear to you  
 In the old days, and know you must love them  
 still

OEDIPUS

May God bless you for this—and be a friendlier  
Guardian to you than he has been to me!

Children where are you?

Come quickly to my hands they are your brothers—

Hands that have brought your fathers once clear  
eyes

To this way of seeing—

Ah dearest ones

I had neither sight nor knowledge then, your  
father

By the woman who was the source of his own life!  
And I weep for you—having no strength to see  
you—,

I weep for you when I think of the bitterness

That men will visit upon you all your lives

What homes, what festivals can you attend

Without being forced to depart again in tears?

And when you come to marriageable age

Where is the man my daughters who would dare

Risk the bane that lies on all my children?

Is there any evil wanting? Your father killed

His father, sowed the womb of her who bore him,

Engendered you at the fount of his own existence!

That is what they will say of you

Then, whom

Can you ever marry? There are no bridegrooms  
for you

And your lives must wither away in sterile dream-  
ing

O Creon, son of Menoikeus!

You are the only father my daughters have,  
Since we their parents, are both of us gone for  
ever

They are your own blood you will not let them

Fall into beggary and loneliness

You will keep them from the miseries that are  
mine!

Take pity on them see they are only children,

Friendless except for you Promise me this,

Great Prince and give me your hand in token of  
it

[CREON clasps his right hand

Children

I could say much if you could understand me,

But as it is, I have only this prayer for you

Live where you can be as happy as you can—

Happier, please God than God has made your  
father!

CREON

Enough You have wept enough Now go within

OEDIPUS

I must but it is hard

CREON

Time eases all things

OEDIPUS

But you must promise—

CREON

Say what you desire

OEDIPUS

Send me from Thebes!

CREON

God grant that I may!

OEDIPUS

But since God hates me

CREON

No, he will grant your wish

OEDIPUS

You promise?

CREON

I can not speak beyond my knowledge 159

OEDIPUS

Then lead me in

CREON

Come now, and leave your children

OEDIPUS

No! Do not take them from me!

CREON

Think no longer

That you are in command here, but rather think

How when you were you served your own de-  
struction

[*Exeunt into the house all but the* CHO  
RUS, *the CHORAGOS chants directly to the*  
*audience*

CHORAGOS

Men of Thebes look upon Oedipus

This is the king who solved the famous riddle

And towered up, most powerful of men

No mortal eyes but looked on him with envy,

Yet in the end ruin swept over him

160

Let every man in mankind's frailty

Consider his last day and let none

Presume on his good fortune until he find

Life, at his death, a memory without pain



## STUDY QUESTIONS

1 What is the situation before the play opens? Is it necessary to know the Theban legend in order to understand the play? Does Sophocles take for granted his audience's knowledge of the legend or does he provide all the information needed as the play progresses? How does he do this?

2 What is the basic action of the play? How is it revealed?

3 What is the function of the chorus? What attitude does it express?

4 How does the style of the poetry contribute to the action of the play? How would you characterize the style?

5 What device does Sophocles use to maintain our interest in the play and to keep the suspense at high tension?

6 What is the nature of Oedipus' character? What are his motivations? What weakness of character does he exhibit?

7 What causes Oedipus' downfall? Is it the fault of his own character or is it the will of the gods? Or is it the operation of the fates?

8 Is Oedipus' fall justified? What effect does his fall have on you?

9 What view of life does Sophocles take in the play? What is your reaction to this view?

10 What points of similarity and of difference do you find in *Oedipus Rex* and *Detective Story*?



## "Oedipus Rex": The Tragic Rhythm of Action

*Francis Fergusson*

Francis Fergusson has pursued a rich career as a teacher and critic. Born in Albuquerque in 1904, he studied at Harvard and Oxford and was for a time assistant director of the Laboratory Theatre in New York. He was head of the Drama Department at Bennington College and later director of the Princeton seminars in literary criticism; he was also a Fellow in the School of Letters at Indiana University. He is now a member of the Department of English at Rutgers University. In addition to his interest in the drama, particularly the modern drama, he is devoted to Dante studies and has published *Dante's Drama of the Mind: A Modern Reading of the Purgatorio*. The essay reprinted here illustrates Professor Fergusson's characteristic critical method: a combination of scholarship and theory based on the myth and ritual

approach to literature. His indebtedness to Kenneth Burke is obvious, but he has refined Burke's techniques and elucidated his terms and categories. The result is a clear yet deep analysis of *Oedipus Rex*.

### *Purgatorio*, CANTO I—

quel secondo regno dove l'umano  
spirito si purga

I SUPPOSE there can be little doubt that *Oedipus Rex* is a crucial instance of drama, if not *the* play which best exemplifies this art in its essential nature and its completeness. It owes its position partly to the fact that Aristotle founded his definitions upon it. But since the time of Aristotle it has been imitated, rewritten, and discussed by many different generations, not only of dramatists, but also of moralists, psychologists, historians, and other students of human nature and destiny.

Though the play is thus generally recognized as an archetype, there has been little agreement about its meaning or its form. It seems to beget in every period a different interpretation and a different dramaturgy. From the seventeenth century until the end of the eighteenth, a Neoclassic and rationalistic interpretation of *Oedipus*, of Greek tragedy, and of Aristotle was generally accepted; and upon this interpretation was based the dramaturgy of Corneille and Racine. Nietzsche, under the inspiration of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, developed a totally different view of it, and thence a different theory of drama. These two views of Greek tragedy, Racine's and Nietzsche's, still provide indispensable perspectives upon *Oedipus*. They show a great deal about modern principles of dramatic composition, and they show, when compared, how central and how essential Sophocles' drama is. In the two essays following, the attempt is made to develop the analogies, the similarities and differences, between these three conceptions of drama.

In our day a conception of *Oedipus* seems to be developing which is neither that of Racine nor that of Nietzsche. This view is based upon the studies which the Cambridge School, Fraser, Cornford, Harrison, Murray, made of the ritual origins of Greek tragedy. It also owes a great deal to the current interest in myth as a way of ordering human experience. *Oedipus*, we now see, is both myth and ritual. It assumes and employs these two ancient ways of understanding and representing human experience, which are prior to the arts and sciences and philosophies of modern times. To understand it (it now appears) we must endeavor to recapture the habit of significant make-believe, of the direct perception of action, which underlies Sophocles' theater.

If *Oedipus* is to be understood in this way, then we shall have to revise our ideas of Sophocles' dramaturgy. The notion of Aristotle's theory of drama and hence of Greek dramaturgy which still prevails (in spite of such studies as Butcher's of the *Poetics*) is largely colored by Neoclassic taste and rationalistic habits of mind. If we are to take it that Sophocles was imitating action before theory instead of after it, like Racine then both the elements and the form of his composition appear in a new light.

In the present essay the attempt is made to draw the deductions, for Sophocles' theater and dramaturgy which the present view of *Oedipus* implies. We shall find that the various traditional views of this play are not so much wrong as partial.

### *Oedipus* MYTH AND PLAY

When Sophocles came to write his play<sup>1</sup> he had the myth of Oedipus to start with. Laius and Jocasta, King and Queen of Thebes, are told by the oracle that their son will grow up to kill his father and marry his mother. The infant's feet pierced is left on Mount Kitharon to die. But a shepherd finds him and takes care of him; at last gives him to another shepherd who takes him to Corinth and there the King and Queen bring him up as their own son. But Oedipus—Clubfoot—is plagued in his turn by the oracle: he hears that he is fated to kill his father and marry his mother, and to escape that fate he leaves Corinth never to return. On his journey he meets an old man with his servants, gets into a dispute with him and kills him and all his followers. He comes to Thebes at the time when the Sphinx is preying upon that City, solves the riddle which the Sphinx propounds and saves the City. He marries the widowed Queen Jocasta; has several children by her; rules prosperously for many years. But when Thebes is suffering under a plague and a drought the oracle reports that the gods are angry because Laius' slayer is unpunished. Oedipus as King undertakes to find him, discovers that he is himself the culprit and that Jocasta is his own mother. He blinds himself and goes into exile. From this time forth he becomes a sort of sacred relic, like the bones of a saint, perilous but good medicine for the community that possesses him. He dies, at last, at Athens in a grove sacred to the Eumenides, female spirits of fertility and night.

It is obvious even from this sketch, that the myth which covers several generations has as much narrative material as *Gone with the Wind*. We do not know what versions of the story Sophocles used. It is the way of myths that they generate whole progenies

of elaborations and varying versions. They are so suggestive, seem to say so much yet so mysteriously, that the mind cannot rest content with any single form but must add or interpret or simplify—reduce to terms which the reason can accept. Mr. William Troy suggests that what is possibly most in order at the moment is a thoroughgoing refurbishment of the medieval fourfold method of interpretation which was first developed; it will be recalled for just such a purpose—to make at least partially available to the reason that complex of human problems which are embedded, deep and imponderable in the Myth.<sup>2</sup> It appears that Sophocles in his play succeeded in preserving the suggestive mystery of the Oedipus myth while presenting it in a wonderfully unified dramatic form and this drama has all the dimensions which the fourfold method was intended to explore.

Everyone knows that when Sophocles planned the plot of the play itself he started almost at the end of the story when the plague descends upon the City of Thebes which Oedipus and Jocasta had been ruling with great success for a number of years. The action of the play takes less than a day, and consists of Oedipus' quest for Laius' slayer—his consulting the Oracle of Apollo, his examination of the Prophet, Tiresias, and of a series of witnesses ending with the old Shepherd who gave him to the King and Queen of Corinth. The play ends when Oedipus is unmistakably revealed as himself the culprit.

At this literal level, the play is intelligible as a murder mystery. Oedipus takes the role of District Attorney and when he at last convicts himself we have a twist, a *coup de theatre*, of unparalleled excitement. But no one who sees or reads the play can rest content with its literal coherence. Questions as to its meaning arise at once. Is Oedipus really guilty, or simply a victim of the gods of his famous complex of fate of original sin? How much did he know, all along? How much did Jocasta know? The first, and most deeply instinctive effort of the mind, when confronted with this play is to endeavor to reduce its meanings to some set of rational categories.

The critics of the Age of Reason tried to understand it as a fable of the enlightened moral will in accordance with the philosophy of that time. Voltaire's version of the play, following Corneille and his comments upon it, may be taken as typical. He sees it as essentially a struggle between a strong and righteous Oedipus and the malicious and very human gods aided and abetted by the corrupt priest Tiresias; he makes it an antireligious tract with an unmistakable moral to satisfy the needs of the discursive intellect. In order to make Oedipus sympathetic to his audience he elides as much as possible the incest motif, and he adds an irrelevant

<sup>1</sup> [In this essay the names of some of the characters are spelled differently from the *Oedipus Rex* translation immediately preceding.—Editors]

<sup>2</sup> Myth Method and the Future by William Troy *Chimera* spring 1946

love story. He was aware that his version and interpretation were not those of Sophocles but with the complacent provinciality of his period he attributes the difference to the darkness of the age in which Sophocles lived.

Other attempts to rationalize *Oedipus Rex* are subtler than Voltaire's, and take us further toward an understanding of the play. Freud's reduction of the play to the concepts of his psychology reveals a great deal, opens up perspectives which we are still exploring. If one reads *Oedipus* in the light of Fustel de Coulanges' *The Ancient City* one may see it as the expression of the ancient patriarchal religion of the Greeks. And other interpretations of the play, theological, philosophical, historical, are available, none of them wrong but all partial, all reductions of Sophocles' masterpiece to an alien set of categories. For the peculiar virtue of Sophocles' presentation of the myth is that it preserves the ultimate mystery by focusing upon the tragic human at a level beneath or prior to any rationalization whatever. The plot is so arranged that we see the action, as it were, illumined from many sides at once.

By starting the play at the end of the story, and showing on-stage only the last crucial episode in Oedipus' life, the past and present action of the protagonist are revealed together and in each other's light. At last felt as one, Oedipus' quest for the slayer of Laius becomes a quest for the hidden reality of his own past and as that slowly comes into focus like repressed material under psychoanalysis—with sensory and emotional immediacy yet in the light of acceptance and understanding—his immediate quest also reaches its end. He comes to see himself (the Savior of the City) and the guilty one, the plague of Thebes, at once and at one.

This presentation of the myth of Oedipus constitutes, in one sense, an interpretation of it. What Sophocles saw as the essence of Oedipus' nature and destiny is not what Seneca or Dryden or Cocteau saw and one may grant that even Sophocles did not exhaust the possibilities in the materials of the myth. But Sophocles' version of the myth does not constitute a reduction in the same sense as the rest.

I have said that the action which Sophocles shows is a quest, the quest for Laius' slayer, and that as Oedipus' past is unrolled before us his whole life is seen as a kind of quest for his true nature and destiny. But since the object of this quest is not clear until the end, the seeking action takes many forms, as its object appears in different lights. The object, indeed, the final perception, the truth, looks so different at the end from what it did at the beginning that Oedipus' action itself may seem not a quest, but its opposite, a flight. Thus it would be hard to say simply, that Oedipus either succeeds or fails. He succeeds, but his success is his undoing. He fails

to find what, in one way, he sought yet from another point of view his search is brilliantly successful. The same ambiguities surround his effort to discover who and what he is. He seems to find that he is nothing yet thereby finds himself. And what of his relation to the gods? His quest may be regarded as a heroic attempt to escape their decrees or as an attempt based upon some deep natural faith to discover what their wishes are, and what true obedience would be. In one sense Oedipus suffers forces he can neither control nor understand, the puppet of fate yet at the same time he wills and intelligently intends his every move.

The meaning, or spiritual content of the play, is not to be sought by trying to resolve such ambiguities as these. The spiritual content of the play is the tragic action which Sophocles directly presents and this action is in its essence *zweideutig*, triumph and destruction, darkness and enlightenment, mourning and rejoicing. At any moment we care to consider it. But this action has also a shape, a beginning, middle, and end in time. It starts with the reasoned purpose of finding Laius' slayer. But this aim meets unforeseen difficulties, evidences which do not fit, and therefore shakes the purpose as it was first understood and so the characters suffer the piteous and terrible sense of the mystery of the human situation. From this suffering or passion, with its shifting visions, a new perception of the situation emerges and on that basis the purpose of the action is redefined and a new movement starts. This movement or tragic rhythm of action, constitutes the shape of the play as a whole. It is also the shape of each episode, each discussion between principals with the chorus following. Mr. Kenneth Burke has studied the tragic rhythm in his *Philosophy of Literary Form* and also in *A Grammar of Motives*, where he gives the three moments, traditional designations which are very suggestive: *Poiesis*, *Pathos*, *Mathesis*. They may also be called, for convenience, Purpose, Passion (or Suffering) and Perception. It is this tragic rhythm of action which is the substance or spiritual content of the play and the clue to its extraordinarily comprehensive form.

In order to illustrate these points in more detail, it is convenient to examine the scene between Oedipus and Tiresias with the chorus following it. This episode, being early in the play (the first big agon), presents as it were a preview of the whole action and constitutes a clear and complete example of action in the tragic rhythm.

#### HERO AND SCAPEGOAT: THE AGON BETWEEN OEDIPUS AND TIRESIAS

The scene between Oedipus and Tiresias comes after the opening sections of the play. We have seen the

citizens of Thebes beseeching their King to find some way to lift the plague which is on the City. We have had Oedipus entrance (majestic but for his tell tale limp) to reassure them and we have heard the report which Creon brings from the Delphic Oracle that the cause of the plague is the unpunished murder of Laius the former king. Oedipus offers rewards to anyone who will reveal the culprit and he threatens with due punishment anyone who conceals or protects him. In the meantime, he decides with the enthusiastic assent of the chorus to summon Tiresias as the first witness.

Tiresias is that suffering seer whom Sophocles uses in *Antigone* also to reveal a truth which other mortals find it hard and uncomfortable to see. He is physically blind but Oedipus and chorus alike assume that if anyone can see who the culprit is it is Tiresias with his uncanny inner vision of the future. As Tiresias enters led by a boy the chorus greets him in these words:<sup>3</sup>

CHORUS But the man to convict him is here. Look they are bringing the one human being in whom the truth is native the godlike seer.

Oedipus is at this point in the play at the opposite pole of experience from Tiresias: he is hero, monarch, helmsman of the state, the solver of the Sphinx's riddle, the triumphant being. He explains his purpose in the following proud, clear terms:

OEDIPUS O Tiresias, you know all things: what may be told and the unspeakable things of earth and things of heaven. You understand the City (though you do not see it) in its present mortal illness—from which to save us and protect us we find, Lord, none but you. For you must know in case you haven't heard it from the messengers that Apollo, when we asked him, told us there was one way only with this plague to discover Laius slayers and put them to death or send them into exile. Therefore you must not jealously withhold your omens, whether of birds or other visionary way, but save yourself and the City—save me, save all of us—from the defilement of the dead. In your hand we are. There is no handsomer work for a man than to bring, with what he has, what help he can.

This speech is the prologue of the scene and the basis of the agon or struggle which follows. This struggle in effect analyzes Oedipus' purpose, places it in a wider context, reveals it as faulty and dubious. At the end of the scene Oedipus loses his original purpose altogether and suffers a wave of rage and fear which will have to be rationalized in its turn.

<sup>3</sup> I am responsible for the English of this scene. The reader is referred to *Oedipus Rex* translated by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co. 1949), a very handsome version of the whole play.

before he can pull himself together and act again with a clear purpose.

In the first part of the struggle Oedipus takes the initiative while Tiresias, on the defensive, tries to avoid replying.

TIRESIAS Oh oh! How terrible to know, when nothing can come of knowing! Indeed, I had lost the vision of these things or I should never have come. OEDIPUS What things? In what discouragement have you come to us here!

TIR Let me go home. I shall endure this most easily and so will you, if you do as I say.

OED But what you ask is not right. To refuse your word is disloyalty to the City that has fed you.

TIR But I see that your demands are exorbitant and lest I too suffer such a—

OED For the sake of the gods if you know, don't turn away! Speak to us, we are your suppliants here.

TIR None of you understands. But I—I never will tell my misery. Or yours.

OED What are you saying? You know, but tell us nothing? You intend treachery to us, and death to the City?

TIR I intend to grieve neither myself nor you. Why then do you try to know? You will never learn from me.

OED Ah, evil old man! You would anger a stone! You will say *nothing*? Stand futile, speechless before us?

TIR You curse my temper but you don't see the one that dwells in you: no, you must blame me.

OED And who would *not* lose his temper if he heard you utter your scorn of the City?

TIR It will come. Silent though I be.

OED Since it will come, it is your duty to inform me.

TIR I shall say no more. Now, if you like, rage to your bitter heart's content.

OED Very well in my rage I shall hold back nothing which I now begin to see. I think you planned that deed, even performed it though not with your own hands. If you could see I should say that the work was yours alone.

In the last speech quoted, Oedipus changes his tack, specifying his purpose differently: he accuses Tiresias and that makes Tiresias attack. In the next part of the fight the opponents trade blow for blow.

TIR You would? I charge you, abide by the decree you uttered from this day forth, speak neither to these present nor to me, unclean as you are, polluter of the earth!

OED You have the impudence to speak out words like these! And now how do you expect to escape?

TIR I have escaped. The truth strengthens and sustains me.

OED Who taught you the truth? Not your prophet's art

TIR You did you force me against my will to speak

OED Speak what? Speak again, that I may understand better

TIR Didn't you understand? Or are you goading me?

OED I can't say I really grasp it speak again

TIR I say you are the murderer of the man whose murderer you seek

OED You won't be glad to have uttered that curse twice

TIR Must I say more so you may rage the more?

OED As much as you like—all is senseless

TIR I say you do not know your own wretchedness nor see in what shame you live with those you love

OED Do you think you can say that forever with impunity?

TIR If the truth has power

OED It has with all but you helpless is truth with you for you are blind in eye in ear in mind

TIR You are the impotent one you utter slanders which every man here will apply to you

OED You have your being only in the night you couldn't hurt me or any man who sees the sun

TIR No Your doom is not to fall by me Apollo suffices for that he will bring it about

OED Are these inventions yours or Creon's?

TIR Your wretchedness is not Creon's, it is yours

OED O wealth and power and skill—which skill in emulous life brings low—what envy eyes you! if for this kingly power which the City gave into my hands unsought—if for *this* the faithful Creon, my friend from the first, has stalked me in secret, yearning to supplant me! if he has bribed this juggling wizard this deceitful beggar who disceins his profit only blind in his own art!

Tell me now tell me where you have proved a true diviner? Why, when the song singing sphinx was near did you not speak deliverance to the people? Her riddles were not for any comer to solve but for the mantic art and you were apparently instructed neither by birds nor by any sign from the gods Yet when I came I Oedipus, all innocent I stopped her song No birds taught me, by my own wit I found the answer And it is I whom you wish to banish thinking that you will then stand close to Creon's throne

You and your ally will weep I think for this attempt and in fact if you didn't seem to be an old man you would already have learned, in pain, of your presumption

In this part the beliefs the visions and hence the purposes of the antagonists are directly contrasted. Because both identify themselves so completely with their visions and purposes the fight descends from

the level of dialectic to a level below the rational altogether it becomes cruelly *ad hominem*. We are made to see the absurd incommensurability of the very beings of Oedipus and Tiresias they shrink from one another as from the uncanny At the end of the round it is Oedipus who has received the deeper wound and his great speech O wealth and power is a far more lyric utterance than the ordered exposition with which he began

The end of this part of the fight is marked by the intervention of the chorus which endeavors to recall the antagonists to the most general version of purpose which they supposedly share the discovery of the truth and the service of the gods

CHORUS To us it appears that this man's words were uttered in anger and yours too Oedipus No need for that consider how best to discharge the mandate of the god

The last part of the struggle shows Tiresias presenting his whole vision and Oedipus on the defensive shaken to the depths

TIR Although you rule, we have equally the right to reply, in that I too have power Indeed I live to serve not you but Apollo and I shall not be enrolled under Creon either Therefore I say since you have insulted even my blindness that though you have eyesight you do not see what misery you are in nor where you are living nor with whom Do you know whence you came? No nor that you are the enemy of your own family the living and the dead The double prayer of mother and father shall from this land hound you in horror—who now see clearly but then in darkness

Where then will your city be bounded? What part of Kithaion not echo it quickly back when you shall come to understand that marriage, to which you sailed on so fair a wind, homelessly home? And many other evils which you do not see will bring you to yourself at last your children's equal

Scorn Creon, therefore and my words you will be struck down more terribly than any mortal

OED Can I really hear such things from him? Are you not gone? To death? To punishment? Not fled from this house?

TIR I should never have come if you hadn't called me

OED I didn't know how mad you would sound or it would have been a long time before I asked you here to my house

TIR This is what I am foolish as it seems to you but wise, to the parents who gave you birth

OED To whom? Wait who gave me birth?

TIR This day shall give you birth and death

OED In what dark riddles you always speak

TIR Arent you the best diviner of riddles?  
 OED Very well mock that gift which you will find,  
     is mine  
 TIR That very gift was your undoing  
 OED But if I saved the City what does it matter?  
 TIR So be it I am going Come, boy, lead me  
 OED Take him away Your presence impedes and  
     trips me once you are gone, you can do no harm  
 TIR I shall go when I have done my errand without  
     fear of your frowns, for they can't hurt me I tell  
     you, then that the man whom you have long  
     been seeking with threats and proclamations  
     Laius slayer is here He is thought to be an alien,  
     but will appear a native Theban and this cir-  
     cumstance will not please him Blind who once  
     could see destitute, who once was rich, leaning on  
     a staff he will make his way through a strange  
     land He will be revealed as brother and father  
     of his own children of the woman who bore him  
     both son and husband sharer of his father's bed,  
     his father's killer

Go in and ponder this If you find it wrong say  
 then I do not understand the prophetic vision

Oedipus rushes off stage his clear purpose gone, his  
 being shaken with fear and anger Tiresias departs,  
 led by his boy The chorus is left to move and chant,  
 suffering the mixed and ambivalent feelings, the  
 suggestive but mysterious images which the passion  
 in which the agon eventuated produces in them

#### CHORUS

*Strophe* I Who is it that the god's voice from the  
     Rock of Delphi says  
     Accomplished the unspeakable with murderous  
     hands?  
     Time now that windswift  
     Stronger than hoises  
     His feet take flight  
     In panoply of fire and lightning  
     Now springs upon him the son of Zeus  
     Whom the dread follow  
     The Fates unappeasable  
*Antistrophe* I New word like light from snowy  
     Parnassus  
     Over all the earth trail the unseen one  
     For in rough wood  
     In cave or rocks  
     Like bull bereft—stampeded, futile  
     He goes seeking with futile foot to  
     Flee the ultimate  
     Doom which ever  
     Lives and flies over him  
*Strophe* II In awe now, and soul's disorder, I neither  
     accept  
     The augurs' wisdom, nor deny I know not what  
     to say

I hover in hope, see neither present nor future  
 Between the House of Laius  
 And Oedipus, I do not hear have never heard of  
     any feud  
 I cannot confirm the public charge against him, to  
     help  
 Avenge the dark murder  
*Antistrophe* II Zeus and Apollo are wise, and all  
     that is mortal  
 They know but whether that human seer knows  
     more than I  
 There is no way of telling surely, though in wis-  
     dom  
 A man may excel  
 Ah never could I, till I see that word confirmed  
     consent to blame him!  
 Before all eyes the winged songstress once, as  
     sailed him  
 Wise showed he in that test, and to the City,  
     tender in my heart  
 I will call him evil never

The chorus is considered in more detail below  
 At this point I merely wish to point out that Oedipus  
 and Tiresias show in their agon the purpose part  
 of the tragic rhythm, that this turns to passion and  
 that the chorus presents the passion and also the  
 new perception which follows This new perception  
 is that of Oedipus as the possible culprit But his  
 outlines are vague perhaps the vision itself is illu-  
 sory a bad dream The chorus has not yet reached  
 the end of its quest that will come only when  
 Oedipus in the flesh before them is unmistakably  
 seen as the guilty one We have reached merely a  
 provisional resting place the end of the first figure in  
 which the tragic rhythm is presented But this figure  
 is a reduced version of the shape of the play as a  
 whole, and the fleeting and unwelcome image of  
 Oedipus as guilty corresponds to the final percep-  
 tion or epiphany the full stop, with which the play  
 ends

#### Oedipus RITUAL AND PLAY

The Cambridge School of Classical Anthropologists  
 has shown in great detail that the form of Greek  
 tragedy follows the form of a very ancient ritual that  
 of the *Enneautos Daimon* or seasonal god.<sup>4</sup> This was  
 one of the most influential discoveries of the last few  
 generations and it gives us new insights into  
*Oedipus* which I think are not yet completely ex-  
 plored The clue to Sophocles' dramatizing of the  
 myth of Oedipus is to be found in this ancient  
 ritual which had a similar form and meaning—that  
 is, it also moved in the tragic rhythm

<sup>4</sup> See especially Jane Ellen Harrison's *Ancient Art and Ritual*  
 and her *Themis* which contains an Excursus on the ritual forms  
 preserved in Greek Tragedy by Professor Gilbert Murray

Experts in classical anthropology like experts in other fields dispute innumerable questions of fact and of interpretation which the layman can only pass over in respectful silence. One of the thornier questions seems to be whether myth or ritual came first. Is the ancient ceremony merely an enactment of the Ur Myth of the year god—Attis or Adonis or Osiris or the Fisher King—in any case that Hero King Father High Priest who fights with his rival is slain and dismembered then rises anew with the spring season? Or did the innumerable myths of this kind arise to explain a ritual which was perhaps mimed or danced or sung to celebrate the annual change of season?

For the purpose of understanding the form and meaning of *Oedipus* it is not necessary to worry about the answer to this question of historic fact. The figure of Oedipus himself fulfills all the requirements of the scapegoat, the dismembered king or god figure. The situation in which Thebes is presented at the beginning of the play—in peril of its life, its crops, its herds, its women mysteriously in fertile signs of a mortal disease of the City and the disfavor of the gods—is like the withering which winter brings and calls in the same way for struggle, dismemberment, death and renewal. And this tragic sequence is the substance of the play. It is enough to know that myth and ritual are close together in their genesis, two direct imitations of the perennial experience of the race.

But when one considers *Oedipus* as a ritual one understands it in ways which one cannot by thinking of it merely as a dramatization of a story. Even that story. Harrison has shown that the Festival of Dionysos, based ultimately upon the yearly vegetation ceremonies included *rites de passage* like that celebrating the assumption of adulthood—celebrations of the mystery of individual growth and development. At the same time it was a prayer for the welfare of the whole City and this welfare was understood not only as material prosperity but also as the natural order of the family, the ancestors, the present members and the generations still to come and by the same token, obedience to the gods who were jealous each in his own province of this natural and divinely sanctioned order and proportion.

We must suppose that Sophocles' audience (the whole population of the City) came early prepared to spend the day in the bleachers. At their feet was the semicircular dancing ground for the chorus, and the thrones for the priests and the altar. Behind that was the raised platform for the principal actors backed by the all-purpose emblematic façade which would presently be taken to represent Oedipus' palace in Thebes. The actors were not professionals in our sense but citizens selected for a religious

office and Sophocles himself had trained them and the chorus.

This crowd must have had as much appetite for thrills and diversion as the crowds who assemble in our day for football games and musical comedies and Sophocles certainly holds the attention with an exciting show. At the same time his audience must have been alert for the fine points of poetry and dramaturgy for *Oedipus* is being offered in competition with other plays on the same bill. But the element which distinguishes this theater, giving it its unique directness and depth is the *ritual expectancy* which Sophocles assumed in his audience. The nearest thing we have to this ritual sense of theater is I suppose to be found at an Easter performance of the *Mattias Passion*. We also can observe something similar in the dances and ritual mummery of the Pueblo Indians. Sophocles' audience must have been prepared like the Indians standing around their plaza to consider the playing, the make believe it was about to see—the choral invocations, with dancing and chanting, the reasoned discourses and the terrible combats of the protagonists, the mourning, the rejoicing and the contemplation of the final stage picture or epiphany—as imitating and celebrating the mystery of human nature and destiny. And this mystery was at once that of individual growth and development and that of the precarious life of the human City.

I have indicated how Sophocles presents the life of the mythic Oedipus in the tragic rhythm, the mysterious quest of life. Oedipus is shown seeking his own true being but at the same time and by the same token the welfare of the City. When one considers the ritual form of the whole play it becomes evident that it presents the tragic but perennial even normal quest of the whole City for its well being. In this larger action, Oedipus is only the protagonist, the first and most important champion. This tragic quest is realized by all the characters in their various ways but in the development of the action as a whole it is the chorus alone that plays a part as important as that of Oedipus, its counterpart in fact. The chorus holds the balance between Oedipus and his antagonists, marks the progress of their struggles and restates the main theme and its new variation after each dialogue or agon. The ancient ritual was probably performed by a chorus alone without individual developments and variations, and the chorus, in *Oedipus* is still the element that throws most light on the ritual form of the play as a whole.

The chorus consists of twelve or fifteen Elders of Thebes. This group is not intended to represent literally all of the citizens either of Thebes or of Athens. The play opens with a large delegation of



Theban citizens before Oedipus palace, and the chorus proper does not enter until after the prologue. Nor does the chorus speak directly for the Athenian audience: we are asked throughout to make believe that the theater is the agora at Thebes and at the same time Sophocles' audience is witnessing a ritual. It would I think be more accurate to say that the chorus represents the point of view and the faith of Thebes as a whole and by analogy of the Athenian audience. Their errand before Oedipus palace is like that of Sophocles' audience in the theater: they are watching a sacred combat in the issue of which they have an all important and official stake. Thus they represent the audience and the citizens in a particular way—not as a mob formed in response to some momentary feeling but rather as an organ of a highly self-conscious community, something closer to the conscience of the race than to the overheated affectivity of a mob.

According to Aristotle a Sophoclean chorus is a character that takes an important role in the action of the play, instead of merely making incidental music between the scenes as in the plays of Euripides. The chorus may be described as a group personality like an old Parliament. It has its own traditions, habits of thought and feeling and mode of being. It exists, in a sense as a living entity, but not with the sharp actuality of an individual. It perceives but its perception is at once wider and vaguer than that of a single man. It shares in its way, the seeking action of the play as a whole but it cannot act in all the modes: it depends upon the chief agonists to invent and try out the detail of policy, just as a rather helpless but critical Parliament depends upon the Prime Minister to act but in its less specific form of life survives his destruction.

When the chorus enters after the prologue with its questions, its invocation of the various gods and its focus upon the hidden and jeopardized welfare of the City—Athens or Thebes—the list of essential *dramatis personæ* as well as the elements needed to celebrate the ritual is complete and the main action can begin. It is the function of the chorus to mark the stages of this action and to perform the suffering and perceiving part of the tragic rhythm. The protagonist and his antagonists develop the purpose with which the tragic sequence begins; the chorus with its less than individual being, broods over the agon, marks their stages with a word (like that of the chorus leader in the middle of the Tiresias scene) and (expressing its emotions and visions in song and dance) suffers the results, and the new perception at the end of the fight.

The choral odes are lyrics but they are not to be understood as poetry, the art of words, only, for they

are intended also to be danced and sung. And though each chorus has its own shape like that of a discrete lyric—its beginning, middle and end—it represents also one passion or pathos in the changing action of the whole. This passion like the other moments in the tragic rhythm is felt at so general or rather, so deep a level that it seems to contain both the mob ferocity that Nietzsche felt in it and at the other extreme the patience of prayer. It is informed by faith in the unseen order of nature and the gods and moves through a sequence of modes of suffering. This may be illustrated from the chorus I have quoted at the end of the Tiresias scene.

It begins (close to the savage emotion of the end of the fight) with images suggesting that cruel Bacchic frenzy which is supposed to be the common root of tragedy and of the old comedy. In panoply of fire and lightning / The son of Zeus now springs upon him. In the first antistrophe these images come together more clearly as we relish the chase and the fleeing culprit as we imagine him begins to resemble Oedipus who is lame and always associated with the rough wilderness of Kitharon. But in the second strophe, as though appalled by its ambivalent feelings and the imagined possibilities, the chorus sinks back into a more dark and patient posture of suffering in awe, hovering in hope. In the second antistrophe this is developed into something like the orthodox Christian attitude of prayer based on faith and assuming the possibility of a hitherto unimaginable truth and answer. Zeus and Apollo are wise etc. The whole chorus then ends with a new vision of Oedipus, of the culprit and of the direction in which the welfare of the City is to be sought. This vision is still colored by the chorus's human love of Oedipus as Hero, for the chorus has still its own purgation to complete, cannot as yet accept completely either the suffering in store for it or Oedipus as scapegoat. But it marks the end of the first complete purpose-passion-perception unit and lays the basis for the new purpose which will begin the next unit.

It is also to be noted that the chorus changes the scene which we as audience, are to imagine. During the agon between Oedipus and Tiresias our attention is fixed upon their clash, and the scene is literal, close and immediate before Oedipus palace. When the fighters depart and the choral music starts the focus suddenly widens as though we had been removed to a distance. We become aware of the interested City around the bright arena, and beyond that, still more dimly of Nature, sacred to the hidden gods. Mr. Burke has expounded the fertile notion that human action may be understood in terms of the scene in which it occurs, and vice versa: the scene is defined by the mode of action. The chorus's

action is not limited by the sharp rationalized purposes of the protagonist: its mode of action, more patient, less sharply realized, is cognate with a wider, if less accurate, awareness of the scene of human life. But the chorus's action, as I have remarked, is not that of passion itself (Nietzsche's cosmic void of night) but suffering informed by the faith of the tribe in a human and a divinely sanctioned natural order. If such deeds as these are honored, the chorus asks after Jocasta's impiety: why should I dance and sing? (lines 894-895). Thus it is one of the most important functions of the chorus to reveal, in its widest and most mysterious extent, the theater of human life which the play, and indeed the whole Festival of Dionysos, assumed. Even when the chorus does not speak but only watches, it maintains this theme and this perspective—ready to take the whole stage when the fighters depart.

If one thinks of the movement of the play, it appears that the tragic rhythm analyzes human action temporally into successive modes, as a crystal analyzes a white beam of light spatially into the colored bands of the spectrum. The chorus always present, represents one of these modes, and at the recurrent moments when reasoned purpose is gone, it takes the stage with its faith-informed passion, moving through an ordered succession of modes of suffering, to a new perception of the immediate situation.

#### SOPHOCLES AND EURIPIDES: THE RATIONALIST

*Oedipus Rex* is a changing image of human life and action which could have been formed only in the mirror of the tragic theater of the Festival of Dionysos. The perspectives of the myth, of the rituals, and of the traditional *hodos*, the way of life of the City—habits of thought and feeling which constitute the traditional wisdom of the race—were all required to make this play possible. That is why we have to try to regain these perspectives if we are to understand the written play which has come down to us: the analysis of the play leads to an analysis of the theater in which it was formed.

But though the theater was there, everyone could not use it to the full. Sophocles was required. This becomes clear if one considers the very different use which Euripides, Sophocles' contemporary, makes of the tragic theater and its ritual forms.

Professor Gilbert Murray has explained in detail how the tragic form is derived from the ritual form, and he has demonstrated the ritual forms which are preserved in each of the extant Greek tragedies. In general, the ritual had its agon, or sacred combat, between the old King, or god, or hero, and the new, corresponding to the agons in the tragedies, and the

clear purpose moment of the tragic rhythm. It had its *Sparagmos*, in which the royal victim was literally or symbolically torn asunder, followed by the lamentation and/or rejoicing of the chorus, elements which correspond to the moments of passion. The ritual had its messenger, its recognition scene, and its epiphany, various plot devices for representing the moment of perception which follows the pathos. Professor Murray, in a word, studies the art of tragedy in the light of ritual forms, and thus throws a really new light upon Aristotle's *Poetics*. The parts of the ritual would appear to correspond to parts of the plot, like recognitions and scenes of suffering, which Aristotle mentions but, in the text which has come down to us, fails to expound completely. In this view, both the ritual and the more highly elaborated and individualized art of tragedy would be imitating action in the tragic rhythm: the parts of the ritual and the parts of the plot would both be devices for showing forth the three moments of this rhythm.

Professor Murray, however, does not make precisely these deductions. Unlike Aristotle, he takes the plays of Euripides rather than Sophocles' *Oedipus* as the patterns of the tragic form. That is because his attitude to the ritual forms is like Euripides' own: he responds to their purely theatrical effectiveness but has no interest or belief in the pre-rational image of human nature and destiny which the ritual conveyed, which Sophocles felt as still alive and significant for his generation and presented once more in *Oedipus*. Professor Murray shows that Euripides restored the literal ritual much more accurately than Sophocles—his epiphanies, for example, are usually the bodily showing forth of a very human god who cynically expounds his cruel part in the proceedings, while the epiphany in *Oedipus*, the final tableau of the blind old man with his incestuous brood, merely conveys the moral truth which underlay the action and implies the anagoge, human dependence upon a mysterious and divine order of nature. Perhaps these distinctions may be summarized as follows. Professor Murray is interested in the ritual forms in abstraction from all content. Sophocles saw also the spiritual content of the old forms, understood them at a level deeper than the literal, as imitations of an action still true to life in his sophisticated age.

Though Euripides and Sophocles wrote at the same time and for the same theater, one cannot understand either the form or the meaning of Euripides' plays on the basis of Sophocles' dramaturgy. The beautiful lyrics sung by Euripides' choruses are, as I have said, incidental music rather than organic parts of the action: they are not based upon the feeling that all have a stake in the common way of life and therefore in the issue of the present action.

Euripides individualistic heroes find no light in their suffering and bring no renewal to the moral life of the community—they are at war with the very clear, human and malicious gods and what they suffer, they suffer unjustly and to no good end. Where Sophocles celebrated irony seems to envisage the *condition humaine* itself—the plight of the psyche in a world which is ultimately mysterious to it—Euripides ironies are all aimed at the incredible gods and at the superstitions of those who believe in them. In short if these two writers both used the tragic theater, they did so in very different ways.

Vernal's *Euripides the Rationalist* shows very clearly what the basis of Euripides' dramaturgy is. His use of myth and ritual is like that which Cocteau or still more exactly Sartre makes of them—for parody or satirical exposition but without any belief in their meaning. If Euripides presents the plight of Electra in realistic detail it is because he wants us to feel the suffering of the individual without benefit of any objective moral or cosmic order—with an almost sensational immediacy he does not see the myth as a whole as significant as such. If he brings Apollo in the flesh, before us it is not because he believes in Apollo but because he disbelieves in him and wishes to reveal this figment of the Greek imagination as literally, incredible. He depends as much as Sophocles upon the common heritage of ritual and myth but he reduces its form and images to the uses of parody and metaphorical illustration in the manner of Ovid and of the French Neoclassic tradition. And the human action he reveals is the extremely modern one of the psyche caught in the categories its reason invents, responding with unmitigated sharpness to the feeling of the moment, but cut off from the deepest level of experience, where the mysterious world is yet felt as real and prior to our inventions, demands and criticisms.

Though Sophocles was not using the myths and ritual forms of the tragic theater for parody and to satirize their tradition it does not appear that he had any more naive belief in their literal validity than Euripides did. He would not for his purpose, have had to ask himself whether the myth of Oedipus conveyed any historic facts. He would not have had to believe that the performance of *Oedipus* or even the Festival of Dionysos itself would assure the Athenians a good crop of children and olives. On the contrary he must have felt that the tragic rhythm of action which he discerned in the myth which he felt as underlying the forms of the ritual, and which he realized in so many ways in his play was a deeper version of human life than any particular manifestation of it or any conceptual understanding of it whether scientific and rationalistic or theological, yet potentially including them all. If one takes Mr. Troy's suggestion, one might say, using the

Medieval notion of fourfold symbolism that Sophocles might well have taken myth and ritual as literally fictions yet still have accepted their deeper meanings—trope, allegory, and anagoge—as valid.

#### *Oedipus* THE IMITATION OF AN ACTION

The general notion we used to compare the forms and spiritual content of tragedy and of ancient ritual was the imitation of action. Ritual imitates action in one way, tragedy in another, and Sophocles' use of ritual forms indicates that he sensed the tragic rhythm common to both.

But the language plot, characters of the play may also be understood in more detail and in relation to each other as imitations in their various media of the one action. I have already quoted Coleridge on the unity of action, not properly a rule, he calls it, but in itself the great end, not only of the drama but of the epic, lyric even to the candle flame cone of an epigram—not only of poetry but of poesy in general as the proper generic term inclusive of all the fine arts, as its species.<sup>5</sup> Probably the influence of Coleridge partly accounts for the revival of this notion of action which underlies the recent studies of poetry which I have mentioned. Mr. Burke's phrase, language as symbolic action, expresses the idea and so does his dictum. The poet spontaneously knows that beauty *is* as beauty *does* (that the state must be embodied in an actualization) (*Four Tropes*).

This idea of action and of the play as the imitation of an action is ultimately derived from the *Poetics*. This derivation is explained in the Appendix. At this point I wish to show how the complex form of *Oedipus*—its plot, characters and discourse—may be understood as the imitation of a certain action.

The action of the play is the quest for Laius slayer. That is the over all aim which informs it—to find the culprit in order to purify human life, as it may be put. Sophocles must have seen this seeking action as the real life of the Oedipus myth discerning it through the personages and events as one discerns life in a plant through the green leaves. Moreover, he must have seen this particular action as a type or crucial instance, of human life in general and hence he was able to present it in the form of the ancient ritual which also presents and celebrates the perennial mystery of human life and action. Thus by action I do not mean the events of the story but the focus or sum of psychic life from which the events in that situation result.

If Sophocles was imitating action in this sense one may schematically imagine his work of composition in three stages, three mimetic acts. 1. He makes the

<sup>5</sup> The essay on *Othello*.

plot i.e. arranges the events of the story in such a way as to reveal the seeking action from which they come 2 He develops the characters of the story as individualized forms of quest 3 He expresses or realizes their actions by means of the words they utter in the various situations of the plot This scheme, of course has nothing to do with the temporal order which the poet may really have followed in elaborating his composition nor to the order we follow in becoming acquainted with it we start with the words the green leaves The scheme refers to the hierarchy of actualizations which we may eventually learn to see in the completed work

1 The first act of imitation consists in making the plot or arrangement of incidents Aristotle says that the tragic poet is primarily a maker of plots, for the plot is the soul of a tragedy its formal cause The arrangement which Sophocles made of the events of the story—starting near the end, and rehearsing the past in relation to what is happening now—already to some degree actualizes the tragic quest he wishes to show even before we sense the characters as individuals or hear them speak and sing

(The reader must be warned that this conception of the plot is rather unfamiliar to us Usually we do not distinguish between the plot as the form of the play and the plot as producing a certain effect upon the audience—excitement, interest suspense, and the like Aristotle also uses plot in this second sense The mimicry of art has a further purpose, or final—as distinguished from its formal—cause, i.e., to reach the audience Thinking of the Athenian theater, he describes the plot as intended to show the universal or to rouse and purge the emotions of pity and terror These two meanings of the word—the form of the action, and the device for reaching the audience—are also further explained in the Appendix At this point I am using the word *plot* in the first sense as the form, the first actualization of the tragic action )

2 The characters or agents are the second actualization of the action According to Aristotle the agents are imitated mainly with a view to the action —i.e., the soul of the tragedy is there already in the order of events the tragic rhythm of the life of Oedipus and Thebes but this action may be more sharply realized and more elaborately shown forth by developing individual variations upon it It was with this principle in mind that Ibsen wrote to his publisher, after two years of work on *The Wild Duck* that the play was nearly complete, and he could now proceed to the more energetic individuation of the characters

If one considers the Oedipus Tiresias scene which I have quoted, one can see how the characters serve

to realize the action of the whole They reveal at any moment a spectrum of action like that which the tragic rhythm spread before us in temporal succession at the same time offering concrete instances of almost photographic sharpness Thus Tiresias suffers in the darkness of his blindness while Oedipus pursues his reasoned purpose, and then Tiresias effectuates his purpose of serving his mantic vision of the truth, while Oedipus suffers a blinding passion of fear and anger The agents also serve to move the action ahead develop it in time, through their conflicts The chorus meanwhile, in some respects between, in others deeper than the antagonists represents the interests of that resolution that final chord of feeling in which the end of the action, seen ironically and sympathetically as one will be realized

3 The third actualization is in the words of the play The seeking action which is the substance of the play is imitated first in the plot, second in the characters and third in the words, concepts and forms of discourse wherein the characters actualize their psychic life in its shifting forms in response to the everchanging situations of the play If one thinks of plotting characterization and poetry as successive acts of imitation by the author, one may also say that they constitute in the completed work a hierarchy of forms and that the words of the play are its highest individuation They are the green leaves which we actually perceive, the product and the sign of the one life of the plant which, by an imaginative effort, one may divine behind them all

At this point one encounters again Mr Burke's theory of language as symbolic action and the many contemporary studies of the arts of poetry which have been made from this point of view It would be appropriate to offer a detailed study of Sophocles language, using the modern tools of analysis to substantiate my main point But this would require the kind of knowledge of Greek which a Jebb spent his life to acquire and I must be content to try to show in very general terms, that the varied forms of the poetry of *Oedipus* can only be understood on a histrionic basis i.e. as coming out of a direct sense of the tragic rhythm of action

In the Oedipus-Tiresias scene there is a spectrum of the forms of discourse corresponding to the spectrum of action which I have described It extends from Oedipus opening speech—a reasoned exposition not of course, without feeling but based essentially upon clear ideas and a logical order—to the choral chant based upon sensuous imagery and the logic of feeling Thus it employs in the beginning the principle of composition which Mr Burke calls syllogistic progression and at the other end of the spectrum Mr Burke's progression by asso

ciation and contrast. When the Neoclassic and rationalistic critics of the seventeenth century read *Oedipus* they saw only the order of reason; they did not know what to make of the chorus. Hence Racine's drama of Action as Rational—a drama of static situations of clear concepts and merely illustrative images. Nietzsche on the other hand saw only the passion of the chorus; for his insight was based on *Tristan* which is composed essentially in sensuous images and moves by association and contrast according to the logic of feeling; the drama which takes action as passion. Neither point of view enables one to see how the scene as a whole hangs together.

If the speeches of the characters and the songs of the chorus are only the foliage of the plant, this is as much as to say that the life and meaning of the whole is never literally and completely present in any one formulation. It takes *all* of the elements—the shifting situation, the changing and developing characters, and their reasoned or lyric utterances, to indicate, in the round, the action. Sophocles wishes to convey. Because this action takes the form of reason as well as passion and of contemplation by way of symbols, because it is essentially moving (in the tragic rhythm) and because it is shared in different ways by all the characters, the play has neither literal unity nor the rational unity of the truly abstract idea or univocal concept. Its parts and its moments are one only by analogy, and just as the Saints warn us that we must believe in order to understand, so we must make believe, by a sympathetic and imitative act of the histrionic sensibility, in order to get what Sophocles intended by his play.

It is the histrionic basis of Sophocles' art which makes it mysterious to us, with our demands for conceptual clarity or for the luxury of yielding to a stream of feeling and subjective imagery. But it is this also which makes it so crucial an instance of the art of the theater in its completeness, as though the author understood song, spectacle, thought, and diction in their primitive and subtle roots. And it is the histrionic basis of drama which undercuts theology and science.

#### ANALOGUES OF THE TRAGIC RHYTHM

In the present study I propose to use *Oedipus* as a landmark, and to relate subsequent forms of drama to it. For it presents a moving image at the nascent moment of highest valency, of a way of life and action which is still at the root of our culture.

Professor Buchanan remarks in *Poetry and Mathematics* that the deepest and most elaborate development of the tragic rhythm is to be found in the *Divine Comedy*. The *Purgatorio* especially, though

an epic and not a drama, evidently moves in the tragic rhythm both as a whole and in detail. The daylight climb up the mountain by moral effort and in the light of natural reason corresponds to the first moment that of purpose. The night under the sign of Faith, Hope and Charity when the Pilgrim can do nothing by his own unaided efforts corresponds to the moments of passion and perception. The Pilgrim as he pauses, mulls over the thoughts and experiences of the day, he sleeps and dreams, seeing ambivalent images from the mythic dreaming of the race, which refer also, both to his own suppressed desires and to his own deepest aspirations. These images gradually solidify and clarify, giving place to a new perception of his situation. This rhythm repeated in varied forms carries the Pilgrim from the superficial but whole-hearted motivations of childhood in the *Antipurgatorio* through the divided counsels of the growing soul to the new innocence, freedom and integrity of the Terrestrial Paradise—the realm of *The Tempest* or of *Oedipus at Colonus*. The same rhythmic conception governs also the detail of the work down to the *terza rima* itself—that verse form which is clear at any moment in its literal fiction yet essentially moving ahead and pointing to deeper meanings.

Because Dante keeps his eye always upon the tragic moving of the psyche itself, his vision like that of Sophocles, is not limited by any of the forms of thought whereby we seek to fix our experience—in which we are idolatrously expiring like the coral animal in its shell. But Professor Buchanan shows that the abstract shape at least of the tragic rhythm is to be recognized in other and more limited or specialized cultural forms as well. This pattern he writes is the Greek view of life. It is the method of their and our science, history and philosophy. The Greek employment of it had been humanistic in the main. The late Middle Ages and the Renaissance substituted natural objects for the heroes of vicarious tragedies, the experiments in the laboratory. They put such objects under controlled conditions, introduced artificial complications and waited for the answering pronouncement of fate. The crucial experiment is the crisis of an attempt to rationalize experience that is to force it into our analogies. Purgation and recognition are now called elimination of false hypotheses and verification. The shift is significant but the essential tragic pattern of tragedy is still there.

The tragic rhythm is, in a sense, the shape of Racinean tragedy, even though Racine was imitating action as essentially rational and would have called the moments of the rhythm exposition, complication, crisis and denouement, to satisfy the reason. It is in a way the shape of *Tristan*, though action in that play is reduced to passion, the principles of compo-

sition to the logic of feeling. Even the over all shape of *Hamlet* is similar though the sense of pathos predominates, and the whole is elaborated in such subtle profusion as can only be explained with reference to Dante and the Middle Ages.

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 From what fields of study does Fergusson draw to illuminate his analysis of *Oedipus Rex*? Why does he go so far afield from literature and criticism?
- 2 What does he achieve by the use of such diversity of materials? Is he able to unify them into a consistent critical point of view?
- 3 How would you define this critical point of view? Can it be applied to other pieces of literature reprinted here?
- 4 How does this point of view compare with that of Burke, Knight and Sypher? How do you suppose some of the more traditional critics represented here such as Johnson, Wordsworth and Arnold would react to this point of view?
- 5 Do you find that the essay does in fact increase your understanding of *Oedipus Rex* or does it seem to you extraneous and far fetched?



## Othello

*William Shakespeare*

The variety of Shakespearean tragedy is so wide and so fascinating that it is a hopeless task to choose one from so many. Because of the diversity of *Hamlet*, the awe of *Lear*, the macabre tone of *Macbeth*, the range of *Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* taken together each has its just claim. However *Othello* is from the point of view of construction the most tautly integrated of the tragedies. Unlike the other tragedies which are more diffuse *Othello* proceeds in an undeviatingly straight line to its inevitable conclusion. Its strength lies in its simplicity: it pits two absolute opposites against each other in the narrow ring of Cyprus and with an unblinking eye depicts their ultimate mutual destruction. On the one hand there is the absolute good of Othello; on the other the absolute evil of Iago. Which triumphs in the end? Shakespeare pursues this question to its implacable end and we as spectators can only watch with fascinated horror for though we are in the position of knowing everything which takes place on the stage—and we are the only ones who do know—we are precisely because we are spectators powerless to intervene. Yet horror is not the end aimed at in *Othello*; rather it is the purgation of evil and the sense of order which the play produces in us. We have

come to see that absolute good and absolute evil are alike unnatural: man is more complex, less good, less evil, a strange mixture which has to be understood on its own terms. Yet even as we learn this lesson we can not help being appalled at the price we have had to pay for it: the deaths of Desdemona and Othello. Is the fact that Shakespeare has left Iago alive at the end of the play a revelation that Shakespeare too, balked at the price?

#### DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

OTHELLO the Moor  
BRABANTIO, father to Desdemona  
CASSIO an honourable lieutenant  
IAGO, a villain  
RODERIGO a gulled gentleman  
DUKE OF VENICE  
SENATORS  
MONTANO Governor of Cyprus  
GENTLEMEN of Cyprus  
LODOVICO, a noble Venetian  
GRATIANO, [brother to Brabantio]  
CLOWN

Sailor Servants Attendants Officers, Messenger  
Herald Musicians

DESDEMONA, wife to Othello  
EMILIA, wife to Iago  
BIANCA, a courtesan

#### (OTHELLO, THE MOOR OF VENICE)

#### ACT I

#### SCENE I

*Enter RODERIGO and IAGO*

ROD Tush, never tell me! I take it much unkindly  
That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse  
As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this  
IAGO Sblood, but you will not hear me!  
If ever I did dream of such a matter,  
Abhor me  
ROD Thou toldst me thou didst hold him in thy  
hate  
IAGO Despise me if I do not Three great ones of  
the city  
In personal suit to make me his lieutenant  
Off-capped to him and by the faith of man  
I know my price I am worth no worse a place  
But he, as loving his own pride and purposes,

Evades them with a bombast circumstance  
Horribly stuffed with epithets of war,  
And in conclusion,  
Nonsuits my mediators For 'Certes says he,  
I have already chose my officer  
And what was he?  
Forsooth a great arithmetician  
20 One Michael Cassio, a Florentine  
A fellow almost damned in a fair wife,  
That never set a squadron in the field  
Nor the division of a battle knows  
More than a spinster, unless the bookish theoretic,  
Wherein the togéd consuls can propose  
As masterly as he Mere prattle, without practice  
Is all his soldiership But he sir had the election  
And I of whom his eyes had seen the proof  
At Rhodes, at Cyprus and on other grounds  
30 Christian and heathen must be beleed and calmed  
By debtor and creditor This counter-caster  
He, in good time, must his lieutenant be  
And I, God bless the mark! his Moorship's ancient  
ROD By heaven I rather would have been his  
hangman  
IAGO Why there's no remedy 'Tis the curse of  
service  
Preferment goes by letter and affection,  
And not by old gradation, where each second  
Stood heir to the first Now sir, be judge yourself  
Whether I in any just term am affianed  
To love the Moor  
40 ROD I would not follow him then  
IAGO O sir, content you  
I follow him to serve my turn upon him  
We cannot all be masters, nor all masters  
Cannot be truly followed You shall mark  
Many a duteous and knee crooking knave  
That doting on his own obsequious bondage  
Wears out his time, much like his master's ass  
For naught but provender and when he's old cash-  
iered  
Whip me such honest knaves Others there are  
50 Who trimmed in forms and visages of duty,  
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves  
And throwing but shows of service on their lords  
Do well thrive by them, and when they have lined  
their coats,  
Do themselves homage These fellows have some  
soul,  
And such a one do I profess myself For, sir,

13 bombast circumstance padded rigmarole 16 Nonsuits dismisses  
21 almost damned in a fair wife about to be ruined by marrying  
a beautiful wife (?) 23 division of a battle arranging of a battle  
line 24 theoretic theory 25 togéd consuls gownned senators 27 had  
the election was chosen 30 beleed and calmed left in the lurch 31  
debtor and creditor bookkeeper counter-caster cashier 32 in good  
time if you please 33 God bless the mark God help us ancient  
ensign 36 Preferment promotion affection favoritism 37 old  
gradation the old way of regular advance 39 affianed bound 45  
knave servant 48 cashiered dismissed 53 lined their coats filled  
their pockets

It is as sure as you are Roderigo  
Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago  
In following him I follow but myself  
Heaven is my judge not I for love and duty,  
But seeming so for my peculiar end  
6 For when my outward action doth demonstrate  
The native act and figure of my heart  
In compliment extern 'tis not long after  
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve  
For daws to peck at I am not what I am  
ROD What a full fortune does the thick lips owe  
If he can carry t thus!  
IAGO Call up her father  
Rouse him make after him poison his delight  
Proclaim him in the streets Incense her kinsmen  
And though he in a fertile climate dwell  
71 Plague him with flies though that his joy be joy,  
Yet throw such changes of vexation on t  
As it may lose some color  
ROD Here is her father's house I'll call aloud  
IAGO Do with like timorous accent and dire yell  
As when, by night and negligence the fire  
Is spied in populous cities  
ROD What ho! Brabantio! Signior Brabantio! ho!  
IAGO Awake! What ho! Brabantio! Thieves!  
thieves! Look to your house, your daughter, and 80  
your bags! Thieves! thieves!  
[Enter] BRABANTIO above, at a window  
BRA What is the reason of this terrible summons?  
What is the matter there?  
ROD Signior, is all your family within?  
IAGO Are your doors locked?  
BRA Why, wherefore ask you this?  
IAGO Zounds, sir, y are robbed! For shame put on  
your gown  
Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul  
Even now now, very now, an old black ram  
Is tupping your white ewe Arise arise!  
Awake the snorting citizens with the bell 90  
Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you  
Arise, I say!  
BRA What, have you lost your wits?  
ROD Most reverend signior do you know my  
voice?  
BRA Not I What are you?  
ROD My name is Roderigo  
BRA The worsè welcome  
I have charged thee not to haunt about my doors  
In honest plainness thou hast heard me say  
My daughter is not for thee And now in madness  
Being full of supper and distempering draughts,  
Upon malicious bravery dost thou come 100  
To start my quiet

60 peculiar end private purpose 62 native act and figure true  
working and image 63 compliment extern outward ceremony 66  
owe own 67 carry t have his own way 75 timorous terrifying 90  
snorting snoring 100 bravery defiance 101 start startle



ROD Sir, sir, sir—

BRA But thou must needs be sure  
My spirit and my place have in them power  
To make this bitter to thee

ROD Patience, good sir—

BRA What tellst thou me of robbing? This is  
Venice

My house is not a grange

ROD Most grave Brabantio,

In simple and pure soul I come to you—

IAGO Zounds sir you are one of those that will  
not serve God if the devil bid you Because we come  
110 to do you service and you think we are ruffians  
you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary  
horse, you'll have your nephews neigh to you, you'll  
have coursers for cousins and gennets for germans

BRA What profane wretch art thou?

IAGO I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your  
daughter and the Moor are now making the beast  
with two backs

BRA Thou art a villan

IAGO You are—a senator

BRA This thou shalt answer I know thee Rode-  
rigo

ROD Sir, I will answer anything But I beseech  
you,

120 If't be your pleasure and most wise consent  
As partly I find it is, that your fair daughter  
At this odd even and dull watch o' th' night,  
Transported with no worse nor better guard  
But with a knave of common hire a gondolier,  
To the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor—  
If this be known to you, and your allowance,  
We then have done you bold and saucy wrongs  
But if you know not this my manners tell me  
We have your wrong rebuke Do not believe  
130 That from the sense of all civility  
I thus would play and trifle with your reverence  
Your daughter if you have not given her leave,  
I say again hath made a gross revolt  
Tying her duty beauty, wit and fortunes  
In an extravagant and wheeling stranger  
Of here and everywhere Straight satisfy yourself  
If she be in her chamber or your house,  
Let loose on me the justice of the state  
For thus deluding you

BRA Strike on the tinder, ho!

140 Give me a taper! Call up all my people!  
This accident is not unlike my dream,  
Belief of it oppresses me already  
Light I say! light!

*Exit*

IAGO Farewell, for I must leave you  
It seems not meet nor wholesome to my place

To be produced as if I stay, I shall,  
Against the Moor For I do know the state,  
However this may gall him with some check,  
Cannot with safety cast him for he's embarked  
With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars,  
Which even now stands in act that for their souls 150  
Another of his fadom they have none  
To lead their business In which regard  
Though I do hate him as I do hell pains,  
Yet for necessity of present life  
I must show out a flag and sign of love  
Which is indeed but sign That you shall surely find  
him  
Lead to the Sagittary the raised search,  
And there will I be with him So farewell *Exit*

*Enter BRABANTIO, in his nightgown and  
SERVANTS with torches*

BRA It is too true an evil Gone she is,  
And what's to come of my despised time 160  
Is naught but bitterness Now Rodrigo,  
Where didst thou see her? O unhappy girl!  
With the Moor sayst thou? Who would be a father?  
How didst thou know 'twas she? O she deceives me  
Past thought! What said she to you? Get more tapers  
Raise all my kindred Are they married, think you?  
ROD Truly I think they are  
BRA O heaven! How got she out? O treason of  
the blood!  
Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters minds  
By what you see them act Is there not charms 170  
By which the property of youth and maidhood  
May be abused? Have you not read Rodrigo,  
Of some such thing?

ROD Yes sir I have indeed

BRA Call up my brother O, would you had had  
her!

Some one way some another Do you know  
Where we may apprehend her and the Moor?

ROD I think I can discover him, if you please  
To get good guard and go along with me

BRA Pray you lead on At every house I'll call  
I may command at most Get weapons ho! 180  
And raise some special officers of night  
On, good Rodrigo, I'll deserve your pains *Exeunt*

## SCENE II

*Enter OTHELLO IAGO, and ATTENDANTS  
with torches*

IAGO Though in the trade of war I have slain  
men,

106 grange lonely farmhouse 111 nephews grandsons 112 gennets  
Spanish horses 113 germans kinsmen 122 odd even between one  
day and the next 126 your allowance approved by you 130 from  
the sense contrary to the feeling 135 extravagant and wheeling  
vagabond and roving 141 accident happening

145 produced brought forward 147 gall annoy check reprimand  
148 cast discharge 150 stands in act are going forward 151 fadom  
capacity 157 Sagittary an inn at the sign of the Archer or Centaur  
159 (s.d.) nightgown dressing gown 165 more 171 property  
nature 172 abused deceived 182 deserve reward

Yet do I hold it very stuff o th conscience  
To do no contrived murther I lack iniquity  
Sometimes to do me service Nine or ten times  
I had thought t have yerked him here under the  
ribs

OTH Tis better as it is

IAGO Nay but he prated

And spoke such scurvy and provoking terms  
Against your honor

That with the little godliness I have

10 I did full hard forbear him But I pray you, sir,  
Are you fast married? Be assured of this,  
That the magnifico is much beloved  
And hath in his effect a voice potential  
As double as the Duke s He will divorce you,  
Or put upon you what restraint or grievance  
The law, with all his might to enforce it on,  
Will give him cable

OTH Let him do his spite

My services which I have done the signiory  
Shall outtongue his complaints Tis yet to know,

20 Which when I know that boasting is an honor  
I shall promulgate, I fetch my life and being  
From men of royal siege and my demerits  
May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune  
As this that I have reached For know, Iago,  
But that I love the gentle Desdemona,  
I would not my unhoused free condition  
Put into circumscription and confine  
For the sea s worth

*Enter CASSIO and OFFICERS with torches*

But look what lights come yond

IAGO Those are the raised father and his friends  
You were best go in

30 OTH Not I I must be found  
My parts, my title, and my perfect soul  
Shall manifest me rightly Is it they?

IAGO By Janus, I think no

OTH The servants of the Duke! and my lieutenant!

The goodness of the night upon you, friends!  
What is the news?

CAS The Duke does greet you General  
And he requenes your haste post haste appearance  
Even on the instant

OTH What s the matter, think you?

CAS Something from Cyprus, as I may divine

40 It is a business of some heat The galleys  
Have sent a dozen sequent messengers  
This very night at one another s heels,  
And many of the consuls, raised and met,

5 yerked stabbed 11 fast firmly 12 magnifico great nobleman 13  
his its potential powerful 14 double doubly influential 18 Signiory  
government of Venice 22 siege position demerits deservings 23  
unbonneted in all courtesy 26 unhoused not tied down 31 parts  
qualities perfect soul clear conscience 37 haste post haste speediest  
40 heat urgency 41 sequent successive 43 consuls council members

Are at the Duke s already You have been hotly  
called for

When being not at your lodging to be found,  
The Senate hath sent about three several quests  
To search you out

OTH Tis well I am found by you

I will but spend a word here in the house,

And go with you [Exit]

CAS Ancient, what makes he here?

IAGO Faith, he tonight hath boarded a land car 50  
rack

If it prove lawful prize he s made for ever

CAS I do not understand

IAGO He s married

CAS To who?

IAGO Marry, to—

[Enter OTHELLO]

Come Captain, will you go?

OTH Have with you

CAS Here comes another troop to seek for you

*Enter BRABANTIO, RODERIGO, and OFFICERS  
with lights and weapons*

IAGO It is Brabantio General, be advised  
He comes to bad intent

OTH Holla! Stand there!

ROD Signior, it is the Moor

BRA Down with him, thief!

[They draw on both sides]

IAGO You, Roderigo! Come, sir I am for you

OTH Keep up your bright swords for the dew  
will rust them

Good signior, you shall more command with years 60  
Than with your weapons

BRA O thou foul thief, where hast thou stowed  
my daughter?

Damned as thou art, thou hast enchanted her!

For I ll refer me to all things of sense,

If she in chams of magic were not bound

Whether a maid so tender, fair, and happy

So opposite to marriage that she shunned

The wealthy curled darlings of our nation,

Would ever have, t incur a general mock,

Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom

Of such a thing as thou to fear, not to delight

Judge me the world if tis not gross in sense

That thou hast practised on her with foul charms

Abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals

That weakens motion I ll have t disputed on

Tis probable and palpable to thinking

I therefore apprehend and do attach thee

For an abuser of the world a practiser

Of arts inhiuted and out of warrant

46 quests groups of searchers 50 carrack treasure ship 55 advised  
on your guard 72 gross obvious 75 motion decision 77 attach  
arrest 79 inhiuted forbidden out of warrant unauthorized

- 80 Lay hold upon him if he do resist  
 Subdue him at his peril  
 OTH Hold your hands,  
 Both you of my inclining and the rest  
 Were it my cue to fight I should have known it  
 Without a prompter Whither will you that I go  
 To answer this your charge?  
 BRA To prison, till fit time  
 Of law and course of direct session  
 Call thee to answer  
 OTH What if I do obey?  
 How may the Duke be therewith satisfied  
 Whose messengers are here about my side  
 90 Upon some present business of the state  
 To bring me to him?  
 OFFICER 'Tis true most worthy signior  
 The Duke's in council and your noble self  
 I am sure is sent for  
 BRA How! The Duke in council!  
 In this time of the night! Bring him away  
 Mine's not an idle cause The Duke himself  
 Or any of my brothers of the state  
 Cannot but feel this wrong as 'twere their own  
 For if such actions may have passage free,  
 Bondslaves and pagans shall our statesmen be  
Exeunt

## SCENE III

*Enter DUKE and SENATORS set at a table,  
 with lights and ATTENDANTS*

- DUKE There is no composition in these news  
 That gives them credit  
 1 SEN Indeed they are disproportioned  
 My letters say a hundred and seven galleys  
 DUKE And mine a hundred forty  
 2 SEN And mine two hundred  
 But though they jump not on a just account,  
 As in these cases where the aim reports  
 'Tis oft with difference, yet do they all confirm  
 A Turkish fleet, and bearing up to Cyprus  
 DUKE Nay, it is possible enough to judgment  
 10 I do not so secure me in the error  
 But the main article I do approve  
 In fearful sense  
 SAILOR (*within*) What ho! what ho! what ho!

*Enter SAILOR*

- OFFICER A messenger from the galleys  
 DUKE Now, what's the business?  
 SAILOR The Turkish preparation makes for  
 Rhodes

82 of my inclining on my side 86 direct regular 90 present immediate 95 idle trivial 1 composition consistency 2 credit credibility 5 jump agree just exact 6 aim conjecture 10 secure me in feel safe because of 11 article statement approve accept

- So was I bid report here to the state  
 By Signior Angelo  
 DUKE How say you by this change?  
 1 SEN This cannot be  
 By no assay of reason 'Tis a pageant  
 To keep us in false gaze When we consider  
 The importance of Cyprus to the Turk  
 And let ourselves again but understand  
 That as it more concerns the Turk than Rhodes  
 So may he with more facile question bear it,  
 For that it stands not in such warlike brace,  
 But altogether lacks the abilities  
 That Rhodes is dressed in if we make thought of this,  
 We must not think the Turk is so unskilful  
 To leave that latest which concerns him first  
 Neglecting an attempt of ease and gain  
 To wake and wage a danger profitless  
 DUKE Nay, in all confidence he's not for Rhodes  
 OFFICER Here is more news

*Enter a MESSENGER*

- MESS The Ottomites reverend and gracious  
 Steering with due course toward the isle of Rhodes  
 Have there enjoined them with an after fleet  
 1 SEN Ay so I thought How many as you  
 guess?  
 MESS Of thirty sail, and now they do restem  
 Their backward course, bearing with frank appearance  
 Their purposes toward Cyprus Signior Montano,  
 Your trusty and most valient servitor  
 With his free duty recommends you thus,  
 And prays you to believe him  
 DUKE 'Tis certain then for Cyprus  
 Marcus Luccicos, is not he in town?  
 1 SEN He's now in Florence  
 DUKE Write from us to him post-post haste dispatch  
 Enter BRABANTIO, OTHELLO CASSIO IAGO,  
 RODERIGO, and OFFICERS  
 1 SEN Here comes Brabantio and the valiant  
 Moor  
 DUKE Valiant Othello, we must straight employ  
 you  
 Against the general enemy Ottoman  
 [to BRABANTIO] I did not see you Welcome, gentle  
 signior  
 We lacked your counsel and your help tonight  
 BRA So did I yours Good your Grace pardon  
 me  
 Neither my place nor aught I heard of business  
 Hath raised me from my bed, nor doth the general  
 care

18 assay of reason reasonable test 19 in false gaze looking the wrong way 23 question contest bear capture 24 brace readiness 25 abilities means of defense 30 wage risk 35 enjoined joined 37 restem steer again 41 recommends reports to

Take hold on me For my particular grief  
Is of so floodgate and oerbearing nature  
That it engluets and swallows other sorrows  
And it is still itself

DUKE Why, what's the matter?

BRA My daughter! O, my daughter!

SENATORS Dead?

BRA Ay to me

60 She is abused, stolen from me and corrupted  
By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks,  
For nature so preposterously to err,  
Being not deficient blind, or lame of sense,  
Sans witchcraft could not

DUKE Whoe'er he be that in this foul proceeding  
Hath thus beguiled your daughter of herself,  
And you of her, the bloody book of law  
You shall yourself read in the bitter letter  
After your own sense yea, though our proper son  
Stood in your action

70 BRA Humbly I thank your Grace  
Here is the man this Moor, whom now it seems  
Your special mandate for the state affairs  
Hath hither brought

ALL We are very sorry for it

DUKE [to OTHELLO] What in your own part can  
you say to this?

BRA Nothing but this is so

OTH Most potent grave and reverend signiors,  
My very noble and approved good masters  
That I have taken away this old man's daughter,  
It is most true, true I have married her

80 The very head and front of my offending  
Hath this extent no more Rude am I in my speech  
And little blessed with the soft phrase of peace,  
For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith  
Till now some nine moons wasted they have used  
Their dearest action in the tented field  
And little of this great world can I speak  
More than pertains to feats of broil and battle  
And therefore little shall I grace my cause  
In speaking for myself Yet by your gracious pa-  
tience,

90 I will a round unvarnished tale deliver  
Of my whole course of love what drugs, what  
charms,

What conjuration, and what mighty magic—  
For such proceeding am I charged withal—  
I won his daughter

BRA A maiden never bold  
Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion  
Blushed at herself and she in spite of nature  
Of years, of country, credit, everything

To fall in love with what she feared to look on!  
It is a judgment maimed and most imperfect  
That will confess perfection so could err  
Against all rules of nature, and must be driven  
To find out practices of cunning hell  
Why this should be I therefore vouch again  
That with some mixtures powerful on the blood  
Or with some dram conjured to this effect,  
He wrought upon her

DUKE To vouch this is no proof  
Without more wider and more overt test  
Than these thin habits and poor likelihoods  
Of modern seeming do prefer against him

1 SEN But Othello speak  
Did you by indirect and forced courses  
Subdue and poison this young maid's affections?  
Or came it by request and such fair question  
As soul to soul affordeth?

OTH I do beseech you  
Send for the lady to the Sagittary  
And let her speak of me before her father  
If you do find me foul in her report,  
The trust, the office, I do hold of you  
Not only take away, but let your sentence  
Even fall upon my life

DUKE Fetch Desdemona hither 120

OTH Ancient, conduct them you best know the  
place

*Exeunt [IAGO and] two or three [ATTENDANTS]*  
And till she come as truly as to heaven  
I do confess the vices of my blood  
So justly to your grave ears I'll present  
How I did thrive in this fair lady's love,  
And she in mine

DUKE Say it Othello

OTH Her father loved me, oft invited me,  
Still questioned me the story of my life  
From year to year the battles sieges fortunes 130  
That I have passed

I ran it through even from my boyish days  
To the very moment that he bade me tell it  
Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances,  
Of moving accidents by flood and field,  
Of hard-breadth scapes, the imminent deadly breach  
Of being taken by the insolent foe  
And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence  
And portance in my traveler's history  
Wherein of anters vast and deserts idle 140  
Rough quarries rocks and hills whose heads touch  
heaven

It was my hint to speak, such was my process,  
And of the Cannibals that each other eat

55 particular personal 56 floodgate sweeping 57 engluets devours  
63 deficient mentally defective 64 Sans without 69 After ac-  
cording to our proper my own 70 Stood in your action were  
accused by you 77 approved proved by experience 81 Rude un-  
polished 83 pith strength 84 wasted gone by 90 round plain 95  
motion emotion 97 credit reputation

102 practices plots 103 vouch assert 104 blood passions 107 test  
evidence 108 habits garments 109 modern commonplace prefer  
present 111 indirect illegal forced violent 112 question conversation  
129 Still constantly 135 accidents events flood sea 136 imminent  
deadly threatening death 139 portance conduct 140 anters caves  
deserts idle empty wildernesses 142 hint occasion process narrative

The Anthropophagi and men whose heads  
 Do grow beneath their shoulders This to hear  
 Would Desdemona seriously incline  
 But still the house affairs would draw her thence  
 Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,  
 She'd come again and with a greedy ear  
 150 Devour up my discourse Which I observing  
 Took once a pliant hour and found good means  
 To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart  
 That I would all my pilgrimage dilate  
 Whereof by parcels she had something heard,  
 But not intently I did consent  
 And often did beguile her of her tears  
 When I did speak of some distressful stroke  
 That my youth suffered My story being done,  
 She gave me for my pains a world of sighs  
 160 She swore in faith 'twas strange 'twas passing  
 strange  
 'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful  
 She wished she had not heard it, yet she wished  
 That heaven had made her such a man She thanked  
 me  
 And bade me if I had a friend that loved her  
 I should but teach him how to tell my story  
 And that would woo her Upon this hint I spake  
 She loved me for the dangers I had passed  
 And I loved her that she did pity them  
 This only is the witchcraft I have used  
 170 Here comes the lady Let her witness it

*Enter DESDEMONA IAGO, and ATTENDANTS*

DUKE I think this tale would win my daughter  
 too  
 Good Brabantio  
 Take up this mangled matter at the best  
 Men do their broken weapons rather use  
 Than their bare hands

BRA I pray you hear her speak  
 If she confess that she was half the wooer,  
 Destruction on my head if my bad blame  
 Light on the man! Come hither gentle mistress  
 Do you perceive in all this noble company  
 Where most you owe obedience?

DES My noble father,  
 180 I do perceive here a divided duty  
 To you I am bound for life and education  
 My life and education both do learn me  
 How to respect you You are the lord of duty  
 I am hitherto your daughter But here's my husband,  
 And so much duty as my mother showed  
 To you preferring you before her father,  
 So much I challenge that I may profess  
 Due to the Moor my lord

144 Anthropophagi man eaters 151 pliant favorable 153 dilate tell  
 in full 154 parcels parts 155 intently with undivided attention  
 160 passing surpassingly 166 hint opportunity 182 education bring  
 ing up 183 learn teach 188 challenge claim the right

BRA Goodbye! I have done  
 Please it your Grace on to the state affairs  
 190 I had rather to adopt a child than get it  
 Come hither Moor  
 I here do give thee that with all my heart  
 Which but thou hast already with all my heart  
 I would keep from thee For your sake jewel  
 I am glad at soul I have no other child  
 For thy escape would teach me tyranny  
 To hang clogs on them I have done my lord  
 DUKE Let me speak like yourself and lay a sen-  
 tence  
 Which as a grise or step may help these lovers  
 200 Into your favor  
 When remedies are past the griefs are ended  
 By seeing the worst, which late on hopes depended  
 To mourn a mischief that is past and gone  
 Is the next way to draw new mischief on  
 What cannot be preserved when Fortune takes,  
 Patience her injury a mockery makes  
 The robbed that smiles steals something from the  
 thief

He robs himself that spends a bootless grief  
 BRA So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile,  
 210 We lose it not, so long as we can smile  
 He bears the sentence well that nothing bears  
 But the free comfort which from thence he hears  
 But he bears both the sentence and the sorrow  
 That to pay grief must of poor patience borrow  
 These sentences to sugar or to gall  
 Being strong on both sides are equivocal  
 But words are words I never yet did hear  
 That the bruised heart was pierced through the ear  
 I humbly beseech you proceed to the affairs of state  
 220 DUKE The Turk with a most mighty preparation  
 makes for Cyprus Othello, the fortitude of the place  
 is best known to you and though we have there a  
 substitute of most allowed sufficiency yet opinion a  
 sovereign mistress of effects throws a more safer  
 voice on you You must therefore be content to sub-  
 ber the gloss of your new fortunes with this more  
 stubborn and boisterous expedition

OTH The tyrant custom most grave senators  
 Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war  
 My thrice-driven bed of down I do agnize  
 230 A natural and prompt alacrity  
 I find in hardness and do undertake  
 These present wars against the Ottomites  
 Most humbly therefore, bending to your state,  
 I crave fit disposition for my wife

191 get beget 195 For your sake because of you 197 escape es-  
 capade 199 like yourself as you should sentence maxim 200 grise  
 degree 204 mischief misfortune 205 next nearest 216 gall bitter  
 ness 219 pierced touched 222 fortitude strength 224 allowed  
 sufficiency acknowledged ability 224 mistress of effects deter-  
 miner of results 225 throws a more safer voice on you votes for  
 you as safer 226 slubber the gloss of take the shine off 227 stub-  
 born rough expedition haste 230 thrice driven thoroughly sorted  
 for softness agnize acknowledge 232 hardness hardship 234 state  
 power

Due reference of place and exhibition,  
With such accommodation and besort  
As levels with her breeding

DUKE If you please,

Be t at her father s

BRA I'll not have it so

OTH Nor I

240 DES Nor I I would not there reside,  
To put my father in impatient thoughts  
By being in his eye Most gracious Duke  
To my unfolding lend your prosperous ear  
And let me find a charter in your voice  
T assist my simpleness

DUKE What would you Desdemona?

DES That I did love the Moor to live with him,  
My downright violence and storm of fortunes  
My trumpet to the world My heart's subdued  
250 Even to the very quality of my lord  
I saw Othello's visage in his mind,  
And to his honors and his valiant parts  
Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate  
So that dear lords if I be left behind  
A moth of peace and he go to the war  
The rites for which I love him are bereft me  
And I a heavy interim shall support  
By his dear absence Let me go with him

OTH Your voices lords beseech you let her will  
260 Have a free way  
Vouch with me heaven I therefore beg it not  
To please the palate of my appetite  
Nor to comply with heat the young affects  
In my distinct and proper satisfaction  
But to be free and bounteous to her mind  
And heaven defend your good souls that you think  
I will your serious and great business scant  
For she is with me No, when light-winged toys  
Of feathered Cupid seel with wanton dullness  
270 My speculative and officed instruments  
That my disports corrupt and taint my business,  
Let housewives make a skillet of my helm  
And all indign and base adversities  
Make head against my estimation!

DUKE Be it as you shall privately determine  
Either for her stay or going Th affair cries haste  
And speed must answer it You must hence tonight

DES Tonight, my lord?

DUKE This night

OTH With all my heart

DUKE At nine o'clock morning here we'll meet again

Othello leave some officer behind 28  
And he shall our commission bring to you,  
With such things else of quality and respect  
As doth import you

OTH So please your Grace, my ancient  
A man he is of honesty and trust  
To his conveyance I assign my wife  
With what else needful your good Grace shall think  
To be sent after me

DUKE Let it be so  
Goodnight to every one [to BRABANTIO] And noble  
signior

If virtue no delighted beauty lack  
Your son in law is far more fair than black 290

I SEN Adieu brave Moor Use Desdemona well  
BRA Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see  
She has deceived her father and may thee

*Exeunt [DUKE SENATORS OFFICERS &c]*

OTH My life upon her faith! Honest Iago  
My Desdemona must I leave to thee  
I prithee let thy wife attend on her  
And bring them after in the best advantage  
Come Desdemona, I have but an hour  
Of love, of worldly matters and direction,  
To spend with thee We must obey the time 300

*Exeunt MOOR and DESDEMONA*

ROD Iago

IAGO What sayst thou noble heart?

ROD What will I do thinkst thou?

IAGO Why go to bed and sleep

ROD I will incontinently drown myself

IAGO If thou dost, I shall never love thee after  
Why thou silly gentleman!

ROD It is silliness to live when to live is torment,  
and then have we a prescription to die when death  
is our physician 310

IAGO O villanous! I have looked upon the world  
for four times seven years and since I could distin-  
guish betwixt a benefit and an injury I never found  
man that knew how to love himself Ere I would  
say I would drown myself for the love of a guinea  
hen I would change my humanity with a baboon

ROD What should I do? I confess it is my shame  
to be so fond but it is not in my virtue to amend it

IAGO Virtue! a fig! 'Tis in ourselves that we are 320  
thus or thus Our bodies are our gardens, to the  
which our wills are gardeners, so that if we will  
plant nettles or sow lettuce set hyssop and weed up  
thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract  
it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness  
or manured with industry, why the power and  
corrigible authority of this lies in our wills If the  
balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to

236 reference assignment exhibition allowance of money 237 besort suitability 238 levels corresponds 243 prosperous favorable 244 charter privilege 248 storm of fortunes plunging into a new sort of life 249 subdued made subject 250 quality nature 252 parts qualities 258 dear deeply felt 261 Vouch bear witness 263 heat desire affects passions 264 distinct separate (defunct in Folio and Quarto) proper personal 265 free liberal 266 defend forbid 268 toys trifles 269 seel close dullness drowsiness 270 speculative and officed instruments eyes whose duty is to watch 271 disports recreations 273 indign unworthy 274 Make head gather troops estimation reputation

283 import concern 285 conveyance escort 289 delighted pleasure giving 297 advantage opportunity 305 incontinently immediately 315 change my humanity exchange my human shape 318 virtue power 322 gender kind 323 distract divide 324 manured cultivated 325 corrigible corrective

poise another of sensuality the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions But we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings our unbitted lusts, whereof I take this that you call love to be a sect or scion

ROD It cannot be

IAGO It is merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will Come be a man Drown thyself! Drown cats and blind puppies I have professed me thy friend and I confess me knit to thy deserving with cables of perdurable toughness I could never better stead thee than now Put money in thy purse follow thou the ways defeat thy favor with an usurped beard I say put money in thy purse It cannot be that Desdemona should long continue her love to the Moor—put money in thy purse—nor he his to her It was a violent commencement in her, and thou shalt see an answerable sequestration put but money in thy purse These Moors are changeable in their wills fill thy purse with money The food that to him now is as luscious as locusts shall be to him shortly as acerb as coloquintida She must change for youth when she is sated with his body she will find the error of her choice Therefore put money in thy purse If thou wilt needs damn thyself do it a more delicate way than drowning Make all the money thou canst If sanctimony and a frail vow betwixt an erring Barbarian and a subtle Venetian be not too hard for my wits and all the tribe of hell thou shalt enjoy her, therefore make money A pox of drowning thyself! It is clean out of the way Seek thou rather to be hanged in compassing thy joy than to be drowned and go without her

ROD Wilt thou be fast to my hopes if I depend on the issue?

IAGO Thou art sure of me Go make money I have told thee often, and I retell thee again and again I hate the Moor My cause is hearted thine hath no less reason Let us be conjunctive in our revenge against him If thou canst cuckold him, thou dost thyself a pleasure me a sport There are many events in the womb of time which will be delivered Traverse go provide thy money We will have more of this tomorrow Adieu

ROD Where shall we meet i th morn'ng?

IAGO At my lodging

ROD I'll be with thee betimes

IAGO Go to farewell Do you hear, Roderigo?

ROD What say you?

326 poise counterbalance 327 blood passions 329 unbitted lusts unbidded desires 330 sect or scion cutting or graft 336 perdurable enduring 337 stead help 338 defeat thy favor spoil your looks 342 answerable sequestration corresponding estrangement 344 wills desires 345 locusts a sweet fruit 346 acerb bitter coloquintida a medicine 350 Make raise 351 sanctimony holiness erring Barbarian wandering Moor from Barbary 354 clean out of the way quite the wrong course 355 compassing achieving 358 issue outcome 361 hearted deeply grounded 362 conjunctive united 365 Traverse forward march 369 betimes early

IAGO No more of drowning do you hear?

ROD I'll sell all my land

*Exit*

IAGO Thus do I ever make my fool my purse For I mine own gained knowledge should profane If I would time expend with such a snipe But for my sport and profit I hate the Moor And it is thought abroad that twixt my sheets Has done my office I know not if t be true But I for mere suspicion in that kind Will do as if for surety He holds me well The better shall my purpose work on him Cassio's a proper man Let me see now To get his place and to plume up my will In double knavery—How, how? Let's see After some time to abuse Othello's ear That he is too familiar with his wife He hath a person and a smooth dispose To be suspected framed to make women false The Moor is of a free and open nature That thinks men honest that but seem to be so And will as tenderly be led by the nose As asses are I have t! It is engendered Hell and night Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light

*Exit*

## ACT II

### SCENE I

*Enter MONTANO and two GENTLEMEN*

MON What from the cape can you discern at sea?

1 GENT Nothing at all it is a high wrought flood

I cannot twixt the heaven and the main

Descry a sail

MON Methinks the wind hath spoke aloud at land

A fuller blast ne'er shook our battlements

If it hath ruffianed so upon the sea

What ribs of oak when mountains melt on them

Can hold the mortise? What shall we hear of this?

2 GENT A segregation of the Turkish fleet

For do but stand upon the foaming shore,

The chidden billow seems to pelt the clouds

The wind shaken surge, with high and monstrous mane

Seems to cast water on the burning Bear

And quench the Guards of the ever fixed pole

I never did like molestation view

376 snipe fool 379 Has he has office function 381 surety certainty 383 proper handsome 384 plume up put a feather in the cap of 386 abuse deceive 388 dispose disposition 390 free frank 3 main sea 10 segregation scattering 15 Guards stars near the North Star pole polestar 16 molestation disturbance



On the enchafed flood

MON If that the Turkish fleet  
Be not ensheltered and embayed they are drowned  
It is impossible to bear it out

*Enter a third GENTLEMAN*

20 3 GENT News lads! Our wars are done  
The desperate tempest hath so banged the Turks  
That their designment halts A noble ship of Venice  
Hath seen a grievous wrack and sufferance  
On most part of their fleet

MON How! Is this true?

3 GENT The ship is here put in  
A Veronesa, Michael Cassio  
Lieutenant to the warlike Moor Othello,  
Is come on shore the Moor himself at sea  
And is in full commission here for Cyprus

30 MON I am glad on t 'Tis a worthy governor

3 GENT But this same Cassio, though he speak  
of comfort

Touching the Turkish loss yet he looks sadly  
And prays the Moor be safe for they were parted  
With foul and violent tempest

MON Pray heaven he be!  
For I have served him and the man commands  
Like a full soldier Let's to the seaside, ho!  
As well to see the vessel that's come in  
As to throw out our eyes for brave Othello,  
Even till we make the main and the aerial blue  
An indistinct regard

40 3 GENT Come let's do so,  
For every minute is expectancy  
Of more arrivance

*Enter CASSIO*

CAS Thanks you the valiant of this warlike isle,  
That so approve the Moor! O let the heavens  
Give him defence against the elements,  
For I have lost him on a dangerous sea!

MON Is he well shipped?

CAS His bark is stoutly timbered and his pilot  
Of very expert and approved allowance  
10 Therefore my hopes not surfeited to death,  
Stand in bold cure

*(Within) A sail a sail a sail!*

CAS What noise?

1 GENT The town is empty on the brow o' the  
sea

Stand ranks of people and they cry A sail!  
CAS My hopes do shape him for the Governor

*A shot*

2 GENT They do discharge their shot of cour-  
tesy

17 enchafed enraged 22 designment plan halts is crippled 23 suf-  
ferance disaster 26 Veronesa ship from Verona 40 An indistinct  
regard not to be told apart 42 arrivance arrivals 49 approved al-  
lowance proved reputation 50 surfeited overindulged 51 Stand in  
bold cure have a good chance of fulfilment

Our friends at least

CAS I pray you sir, go forth  
And give us truth who 'tis that is arrived

2 GENT I shall

*Exit*

MON But good Lieutenant, is your General  
wiv'd?

CAS Most fortunately He hath achieved a maid  
That paragon's description and wild fame  
One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens  
And in the essential vesture of creation  
Does tire the ingener

*Enter SECOND GENTLEMAN*

How now! Who has put in?

2 GENT 'Tis one Iago, ancient to the General

CAS Has had most favorable and happy speed  
Tempests themselves, high seas and howling winds  
The guttered rocks and congregated sands,  
Traitors ensteeped to clog the guiltless keel,  
As having sense of beauty do omit  
Their mortal natures letting go safely by  
The divine Desdemona

MON What is she?

CAS She that I spake of, our great captain's cap-  
tan

Left in the conduct of the bold Iago  
Whose footing here anticipates our thoughts  
A sennight's speed Great Jove, Othello guard  
And swell his sail with thine own powerful breath  
That he may bless this bay with his tall ship,  
Make love's quick pants in Desdemona's arms,  
Give renewed fire to our extincted spirits,  
And bring all Cyprus comfort!

*Enter DESDEMONA, IAGO, EMILIA and RODERIGO*

O behold

The riches of the ship is come on shore!  
You men of Cyprus let her have your knees  
Hail to thee lady! and the grace of heaven  
Before, behind thee and on every hand  
Enwheel thee round!

DES I thank you, valiant Cassio  
What tidings can you tell me of my lord?

CAS He is not yet arrived, nor know I aught  
But that he's well and will be shortly here

DES O but I fear! How lost you company?

CAS The great contention of the sea and skies  
Parted our fellowship

*(Within) A sail a sail! [A shot]*

But hark, a sail!

2 GENT They give their greeting to the citadel  
This likewise is a friend

62 paragon's surpasses 63 quirks ingenuities blazoning praising 64  
essential vesture of creation real qualities which God gave her  
65 ingener inventor of praises 69 guttered furrowed 70 ensteeped  
submerged 72 mortal deadly 75 conduct escort 76 footing landing  
77 sennight week 81 extincted quenched 87 Enwheel encompass

CAS See for the news  
 [Exit GENTLEMAN]  
 Good ancient, you are welcome [To EMILIA] Wel  
 come, mistress  
 Let it not gall your patience good Iago,  
 That I extend my manners 'Tis my breeding  
 100 That gives me this bold show of courtesy  
 [Kisses her]  
 IAGO Sir, would she give you so much of her lips  
 As of her tongue she oft bestows on me,  
 You d have enough  
 DES Alas, she has no speech!  
 IAGO In faith, too much  
 I find it still when I have list to sleep  
 Marry before your ladyship I grant,  
 She puts her tongue a little in her heart  
 And chides with thinking  
 EMIL You have little cause to say so  
 110 IAGO Come on, come on, you are pictures out  
 adoors,  
 Bells in your parlors wildcats in your kitchens  
 Saints in your injuries, devils being offended,  
 Players in your huswifery and huswives in your  
 beds  
 DES O fie upon thee slanderer!  
 IAGO Nay it is true or else I am a Turk,  
 You rise to play and go to bed to work  
 EMIL You shall not write my praise  
 IAGO No let me not  
 DES What wouldst thou write of me if thou  
 shouldst praise me?  
 IAGO O gentle lady, do not put me to t,  
 120 For I am nothing if not critical  
 DES Come on, assay There's one gone to the  
 harbor?  
 IAGO Ay madam  
 DES I am not merry but I do beguile  
 The thing I am by seeming otherwise  
 Come, how wouldst thou praise me?  
 IAGO I am about it but indeed my invention  
 Comes from my pate as birdlime does from frieze,  
 It plucks out brains and all But my Muse labors  
 And thus she is delivered  
 130 If she be fair and wise fairness and wit  
 The one's for use the other useth it  
 DES Well praised! How if she be black and witty?  
 IAGO If she be black and thereto have a wit  
 She'll find a white that shall her blackness fit  
 DES Worse and worse!  
 EMIL How if fair and foolish?  
 IAGO She never yet was foolish that was fair,  
 For even her folly helped her to an heir

99 extend use 105 list wish 113 huswifery housewives duties  
 huswives hussies 121 assay try 127 frieze rough cloth 132 black  
 dark 138 folly wantonness

DES These are old fond paradoxes to make fools  
 laugh 1 th alehouse What miserable praise hast 140  
 thou for her that's foul and foolish?

IAGO There's none so foul and foolish thereunto,  
 But does foul pranks which fair and wise ones do

DES O heavy ignorance! Thou praisest the worst  
 best But what praise couldst thou bestow on a  
 deserving woman indeed? one that in the authority  
 of her merit did justly put on the vouch of very  
 malice itself?

IAGO She that was ever fair and never proud  
 Had tongue at will and yet was never loud  
 Never lacked gold and yet went never gay 150  
 Fled from her wish and yet said Now I may  
 She that being angered her revenge being nigh  
 Bade her wrong stay and her displeasure fly  
 She that in wisdom never was so frail  
 To change the cod's head for the salmon's tail  
 She that could think and ne'er disclose her mind  
 See suitors following and not look behind  
 She was a wight if ever such wight were—

DES To do what?

IAGO To suckle fools and chronicle small beer 160

DES O most lame and impotent conclusion! Do  
 not learn of him Emilia though he be thy husband  
 How say you Cassio is he not a most profane and  
 liberal counselor?

CAS He speaks home madam you may relish  
 him more in the soldier than in the scholar

IAGO [aside] He takes her by the palm Ay well  
 said, whisper With as little a web as this will I  
 ensnare as great a fly as Cassio Ay smile upon her,  
 do I will gyve thee in thine own courtship You say  
 true, 'tis so indeed If such tricks as these strip you  
 out of your lieutenantry, it had been better you had 170  
 not kissed your three fingers so oft, which now  
 again you are most apt to play the sir in Very good  
 well kissed an excellent courtesy! 'Tis so indeed Yet  
 again your fingers to your lips? Would they were  
 clyster pipes for your sake! (Trumpets within) The  
 Moor! I know his trumpet

CAS 'Tis truly so

DES Let's meet him and receive him

CAS Lo where he comes!

Enter OTHELLO and ATTENDANTS

OTH O my fan warrior!

DES My dear Othello! 180

OTH It gives me wonder great as my content  
 To see you here before me O my soul's joy!  
 If after every tempest come such calms,

139 fond foolish 141 foul ugly 144 heavy dull 147 put on the vouch  
 stir the approval 160 chronicle small beer keep household accounts  
 163 liberal wanton 164 home bluntly 168 gyve handcuff courtship  
 courtesy 174 clyster pipes syringes 181 content happiness

May the winds blow till they have wakened death,  
And let the laboring bark climb hills of seas  
Olympus high and duck again as low  
As hell's from heaven! If it were now to die,  
Twere now to be most happy, for I fear  
My soul hath her content so absolute  
That not another comfort like to this  
Succeeds in unknown fate

DES The heavens forbid  
But that our loves and comforts should increase  
Even as our days do grow!

OTH Amen to that sweet powers!  
I cannot speak enough of this content  
It stops me here, it is too much of joy  
And this and this the greatest discords be

*They kiss*  
That e'er our hearts shall make!

IAGO [*aside*] O you are well tuned now!  
But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,  
As honest as I am

OTH Come, let us to the castle  
News friends! Our wars are done, the Turks are  
drowned

How does my old acquaintance of this isle?  
Honey, you shall be well desired in Cyprus  
I have found great love amongst them O my sweet  
I prattle out of fashion and I dote  
In mine own comforts I prithee, good Iago,  
Go to the bay and disembark my coffers  
Bring thou the master to the citadel  
He is a good one and his worthiness  
Does challenge much respect Come, Desdemona  
Once more well met at Cyprus

*Exeunt [all but IAGO and RODERIGO]*

IAGO [*To an ATTENDANT who goes out*] Do thou  
meet me presently at the harbor [*To RODERIGO*]  
Come hither If thou be'st valiant—as they say base  
men being in love have then a nobility in their  
natures more than is native to them—list me The  
Lieutenant tonight watches on the court of guard  
First, I must tell thee this Desdemona is directly in  
love with him

ROD With him? Why tis not possible

IAGO Lay thy finger thus, and let thy soul be  
instructed Mark me with what violence she first  
loved the Moor, but for bragging and telling her  
fantastical lies and will she love him still for prat-  
tling? Let not thy discreet heart think it Her eye  
must be fed and what delight shall she have to look  
on the devil? When the blood is made dull with the  
act of sport, there should be again to inflame it and  
to give satiety a fresh appetite, loveliness in favor  
sympathy in years manners and beauties all which

the Moor is defective in Now for want of these re-  
quired conveniences her delicate tenderness will  
find itself abused begin to heave the gorge, dis-  
relish and abhor the Moor Very nature will instruct  
her in it and compel her to some second choice  
Now, sir this granted—as it is a most pregnant and  
unforced position—who stands so eminent in the  
degree of this fortune as Cassio does? A knave very  
voluble, no further conscionable than in putting on  
the mere form of civil and humane seeming for the  
better compassing of his salt and most hidden loose  
affection? Why, none why none A slipper and  
subtle knave, a finder-out of occasions that has an  
eye can stamp and counterfeit advantages though  
true advantage never present itself a devilish knave  
Besides, the knave is handsome young and hath all  
those requisites in him that folly and green minds  
look after A pestilent complete knave! and the  
woman hath found him already

ROD I cannot believe that in her, she's full of  
most blessed condition

IAGO Blessed figs end! The wine she drinks is  
made of grapes If she had been blessed she would  
never have loved the Moor Blessed pudding! Didst  
thou not see her paddle with the palm of his hand?  
Didst not mark that?

ROD Yes that I did, but that was but courtesy

IAGO Lechery, by this hand! an index and ob-  
scure prologue to the history of lust and foul  
thoughts They met so near with their lips that their  
breaths embraced together Villanous thoughts, Rod-  
erigo! When these mutualities so marshal the way  
hard at hand comes the master and man exercise  
th incorporate conclusion Pish! But, sir be you  
ruled by me I have brought you from Venice  
Watch you tonight for the command I'll lay't upon  
you Cassio knows you not I'll not be far from you  
Do you find some occasion to anger Cassio either  
by speaking too loud or taunting his discipline or  
from what other course you please which the time  
shall more favorably minister

ROD Well?

IAGO Sir, he's rash and very sudden in choler,  
and haply with his truncheon may strike at you  
Provoke him that he may for even out of that will I  
cause these of Cyprus to mutiny whose qualification  
shall come into no true taste again but by the dis-  
planting of Cassio So shall you have a shorter jour-  
ney to your desires by the means I shall then have  
to prefer them, and the impediment most profitably

228 conveniences fitting qualities 229 heave the gorge become  
nauseated 232 pregnant obvious 233 position assertion 235 con-  
scionable conscientious 236 humane polite compassing achieving  
salt lustful 239 advantages opportunities 242 complete accom-  
plished 245 condition character 251 index forerunner 254 mutual-  
ities familiarities 255 marshal lead 256 incorporate making one  
body 261 taunting slandering 264 choler anger 265 truncheon  
baton 267 qualification pacifying 270 prefer advance

188 happy fortunate 198 set down put out of adjustment 202 de-  
sired made welcome 209 challenge claim 215 court of guard head  
quarters of the guard 226 favor features sympathy similarity

removed without the which there were no expectation of our prosperity

ROD I will do this if I can bring it to any opportunity

IAGO I warrant thee Meet me by and by at the citadel I must fetch his necessities ashore Farewell

ROD Adieu *Exit*

IAGO That Cassio loves her I do well believe t,  
That she loves him tis apt and of great credit  
The Moor howbeit that I endure him not

280 Is of a constant loving noble nature,  
And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona  
A most dear husband Now I do love her too,  
Not out of absolute lust though peradventure  
I stand accountant for as great a sin

But partly led to diet my revenge  
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor  
Hath leaped into my seat the thought whereof  
Doth like a poisonous mineral gnaw my inwards,  
And nothing can or shall content my soul

290 Till I am evened with him wife for wife,  
Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor  
At least into a jealousy so strong  
That judgment cannot cure Which thing to do,  
If this poor trash of Venice whom I trash  
For his quick hunting stand the putting on,  
I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip

Abuse him to the Moor in the rank garb—  
For I fear Cassio with my nightcap too—  
Make the Moor thank me love me, and reward me  
300 For making him egregiously an ass  
And practising upon his peace and quiet  
Even to madness Tis here but yet confused  
Knavery's plain face is never seen till used *Exit*

## SCENE II

*Enter OTHELLO'S HERALD with a proclamation*

HER It is Othello's pleasure, our noble and valiant General that upon certain tidings now arrived, importing the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet every man put himself into triumph some to dance, some to make bonfires, each man to what sport and revels his addiction leads him For besides these beneficial news it is the celebration of his nuptial So much was his pleasure should be proclaimed All offices are open and there is full liberty of feasting from this present hour of five till the bell have told eleven Heaven bless the isle of Cyprus and our noble General Othello!  
10 *Exit*

272 prosperity success 278 apt likely credit probability 284 accountant accountable 285 diet satisfy 294 trash For his quick hunting restrain to keep him from hasty action 295 putting on stirring up 297 rank garb coarse fashion 301 practising plotting 3 mere perdition utter ruin 5 addiction inclination 7 All Offices are open He is holding open house

## [SCENE III]

*Enter OTHELLO, DESDEMONA, CASSIO, and ATTENDANTS*

OTH Good Michael, look you to the guard to night

Let's teach ourselves that honorable stop  
Not to outsport discretion

CAS Iago hath direction what to do  
But notwithstanding with my personal eye  
Will I look to t

OTH Iago is most honest  
Michael good night Tomorrow with your earliest  
Let me have speech with you Come my dear love,  
The purchase made the fruits are to ensue  
That profits yet to come tween me and you  
Goodnight 10

*Exeunt OTHELLO and DESDEMONA  
[with ATTENDANTS] Enter IAGO*

CAS Welcome, Iago We must to the watch

IAGO Not this hour Lieutenant, tis not yet ten o'clock Our General cast us thus early for the love of his Desdemona, who let us not therefore blame he hath not yet made wanton the night with her, and she is sport for Jove

CAS She's a most exquisite lady

IAGO And I'll warrant her full of game

CAS Indeed, she's a most fresh and delicate creature

IAGO What an eye she has! Methinks it sounds 20  
a parley to provocation

CAS An inviting eye and yet methinks right modest

IAGO And when she speaks is it not an alarum to love?

CAS She is indeed perfection

IAGO Well happiness to their sheets! Come, Lieutenant I have a stope of wine and here without are a brace of Cyprus gallants that would fain have a measure to the health of black Othello

CAS Not tonight good Iago I have very poor and unhappy brains for drinking I could well wish 30  
courtesy would invent some other custom of entertainment

IAGO O, they are our friends But one cup I'll drink for you

CAS I have drunk but one cup tonight and that was craftily qualified too and behold what innovation it makes here I am unfortunate in the infirmity and dare not task my weakness with any more

IAGO What man! Tis a night of revels, the gallants desire it

CAS Where are they?

14 cast got rid of 23 alarum summons 26 stoep tankard 30 unhappy unfortunate 35 craftily qualified slyly diluted innovation violent change 37 task burden

IAGO Here at the door I pray you call them in

CAS I'll do't but it dislikes me *Exit*

IAGO If I can fasten but one cup upon him  
With that which he hath drunk tonight already,  
He'll be as full of quarrel and offence  
As my young mistress dog Now my sick fool Rod-  
erigo

Whom love hath turned almost the wrong side out  
To Desdemona hath tonight caroused  
Potations pottle deep and he's to watch  
50 Three lads of Cyprus, noble swelling spirits,  
That hold their honors in a wary distance  
The very elements of this warlike isle  
Have I tonight flustered with flowing cups  
And they watch too Now amongst this flock of  
drunkards

Am I to put our Cassio in some action  
That may offend the isle

*Enter CASSIO MONTANO and GENTLEMEN*

But here they come  
If consequence do but approve my dream  
My boat sails freely both with wind and stream

CAS Fore God, they have given me a rouse  
already

60 MON Good faith a little one, not past a pint,  
as I am a soldier

IAGO Some wine ho! [*Sings*]

And let me the cannikin clink clink,  
And let me the cannikin clink

A soldier's man

O man's life's but a span

Why then let a soldier drink

Some wine, boys!

CAS Fore God, an excellent song!

70 IAGO I learned it in England where indeed they  
are most potent in potting Your Dane your German,  
and your swag bellied Hollander—Drink, ho!—are  
nothing to your English

CAS Is your Englishman so exquisite in his drink-  
ing?

IAGO Why he drinks you with facility your Dane  
dead drunk he sweats not to overthrow your Al-  
main he gives your Hollander a vomit ere the next  
pottle can be filled

CAS To the health of our General!

MON I am for it, Lieutenant, and I'll do you  
justice

80 IAGO O sweet England! [*Sings*]

King Stephen was and a worthy peer

His breeches cost him but a crown

He held them sixpence all too dear

With that he called the tailor lown

49 pottle flagon 51 in a wary distance on guard to keep disgrace  
away 57 consequence the result approve my dream justify my  
hope 59 rouse carouse 72 swag bellied paunchy 76 Almain Ger-  
man 78 do you justice drink as deep as you 84 lown rascal

He was a wight of high renown  
And thou art but of low degree  
Tis pride that pulls the country down  
Then take thine auld cloak about thee

Some wine, ho!

CAS Fore God this is a more exquisite song than 90  
the other

IAGO Will you hear't agan?

CAS No, for I hold him to be unworthy of his  
place that does those things Well God's above all,  
and there be souls must be saved and there be souls  
must not be saved

IAGO It's true good Lieutenant

CAS For mine own part—no offence to the  
General, nor any man of quality—I hope to be  
saved

IAGO And so do I too, Lieutenant

CAS Ay but, by your leave, not before me The 100  
lieutenant is to be saved before the ancient Let's  
have no more of this let's to our affairs God forgive  
us our sins! Gentlemen let's look to our business  
Do not think gentlemen I am drunk This is my  
ancient this is my right hand and this is my left  
I am not drunk now, I can stand well enough and  
speak well enough

ALL Excellent well

CAS Why very well then, you must not think  
then that I am drunk *Exit*

MON To th' platform, masters Come, let's set  
the watch 110

IAGO You see this fellow that is gone before

He is a soldier fit to stand by Cæsar

And give direction and do but see his vice

Tis to his virtue a just equinox

The one as long as th' other Tis pity of him

I fear the trust Othello puts him in

On some odd time of his infirmity

Will shake this island

MON But is he often thus?

IAGO Tis evermore the prologue to his sleep

He'll watch the horologe a double set 120

If drink rock not his cradle

MON It were well

The General were put in mind of it

Perhaps he sees it not or his good nature

Prizes the virtue that appears in Cassio

And looks not on his evils Is not this true?

*Enter RODERIGO*

IAGO [*aside to him*] How now Roderigo!

I pray you after the Lieutenant go *Exit RODERIGO*

MON And 'tis great pity that the noble Moor

Should hazard such a place as his own second

With one of an ingraft infirmity 130

114 just equinox exact equivalent 120 horologe clock a double set  
twice around

It were an honest action to say so  
To the Moor

IAGO Not I for this fair island  
I do love Cassio well and would do much  
To cure him of this evil

(Within) Help! help!  
But hark! What noise?

*Enter CASSIO, driving in RODERIGO*

CAS Zouns, you rogue! you rascal!

MON What's the matter Lieutenant?

CAS A knave teach me my duty?  
I'll beat the knave into a twiggen bottle

ROD Beat me?

CAS Dost thou prate rogue?

MON Nay, good Lieutenant!

I pray you sir hold your hand

CAS Let me go sir,

140 Or I'll knock you over the mazzard

MON Come come you're drunk

CAS Drunk! *They fight*

IAGO [*aside to RODERIGO*] Away I say, go out  
and cry a mutiny [*Exit RODERIGO*]

Nay good Lieutenant! God's will, gentlemen!

Help! ho! Lieutenant! Sir! Montano! Sir!

Help, masters! Here's a goodly witch indeed!

*A bell rung*

Who's that which rings the bell? Diablo ho!

The town will rise God's will Lieutenant hold!

You will be shamed for ever

*Enter OTHELLO and GENTLEMEN with weapons*

OTH What is the matter here?

MON Zouns I bleed still I am hurt to the death

150 OTH Hold for your lives!

IAGO Hold, ho! Lieutenant! Sir! Montano! Gen-  
tlemen!

Have you forgot all sense of place and duty?

Hold! The General speaks to you Hold, for shame!

OTH Why, how now, ho! From whence comest  
this?

Are we turned Turks and to ourselves do that

Which heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?

For Christian shame put by this barbarous brawl!

He that stirs next to carve for his own rage

Holds his soul light he dies upon his motion

160 Silence that dreadful bell! It frights the isle

From her propriety What's the matter, masters?

Honest Iago that looks dead with grieving,

Speak Who began this? On thy love I charge thee

IAGO I do not know Friends all but now even  
now,

In quarter and in terms like bride and groom

Devesting them for bed, and then but now

137 twiggen wicker covered 140 mazzard head 158 carve for  
indulge 161 propriety true self 165 quarter friendship 166 Devest  
ing undressing

As if some planet had unwitting men  
Swords out and tilting one at other's breast

In opposition bloody I cannot speak

Any beginning to this peevish odds

And would in action glorious I had lost

Those legs that brought me to a part of it!

OTH How comes it Michael you are thus for  
got?

CAS I pray you pardon me, I cannot speak

OTH Worthy Montano you were wont be civil

The gravity and stillness of your youth

The world hath noted, and your name is great

In mouths of wisest censure What's the matter

That you unlace your reputation thus

And spend your rich opinion for the name

Of a night brawler? Give me answer to t

MON Worthy Othello I am hurt to danger

Your officer Iago, can inform you

While I spare speech, which something now offends  
me

Of all that I do know nor know I ought

By me that's said or done amiss this night,

Unless self charity be sometimes a vice

And to defend ourselves it be a sin

When violence assails us

OTH Now by heaven

My blood begins my safer guides to rule

And passion having my best judgment collied

Assays to lead the way If I once stir

Or do but lift this arm the best of you

Shall sink in my rebuke Give me to know

How this foul rout began who set it on

And he that is approved in this offence

Though he had twinned with me both at a birth,

Shall lose me What! in a town of war

Yet wild, the people's hearts brimful of fear,

To manage private and domestic quarrel?

In night and on the court and guard of safety?

'Tis monstrous Iago who began t?

MON If partially affined or leagued in office,

Thou dost deliver more or less than truth,

Thou art no soldier

IAGO Touch me not so near

I had rather have this tongue cut from my mouth

Than it should do offence to Michael Cassio,

Yet I persuade myself to speak the truth

Shall nothing wrong him Thus it is General

Montano and myself being in speech

There comes a fellow crying out for help

And Cassio following him with determined sword

To execute upon him Sir this gentleman

Steps in to Cassio and entreats his pause

170 peevish odds foolish quarrel 178 censure judgment 179 unlace  
undo 180 rich opinion high reputation 184 offends pains 190  
blood passion 191 collied blackened 192 Assays tries 195 rout up  
rout 196 approved proved guilty 200 manage carry on 203  
partially affined biased by comradeship 209 nothing in no way  
213 execute do violence

170

180

190

200

210

Myself the crying fellow did pursue,  
Lest by his clamor—as it so fell out—  
The town might fall in fright He swift of foot,  
Outran my purpose and I returned the rather  
For that I heard the clink and fall of swords  
220 And Cassio high in oath which till tonight  
I neer might say before When I came back—  
For this was brief—I found them close together  
At blow and thrust even as agam they were  
When you yourself did part them  
More of this matter cannot I report,  
But men are men, the best sometimes forget  
Though Cassio did some little wrong to him,  
As men in rage strike those that wish them best,  
Yet surely Cassio I believe, received  
230 From him that fled some strange indignity  
Which patience could not pass

OTH I know Iago  
Thy honesty and love doth mince this matter  
Making it light to Cassio Cassio, I love thee,  
But never more be officer of mine

*Enter DESDEMONA attended*

Look if my gentle love be not raised up!  
I'll make thee an example

DES What is the matter dear?

OTH All's well, sweeting, come away to bed  
[To MONTANO] Sir for your hurts myself will be  
your surgeon

Lead him off [*Exit MONTANO with ATTENDANTS*]

240 Iago look with care about the town  
And silence those whom this vilde brawl distracted  
Come, Desdemona tis the soldiers life  
To have their balmy slumbers waked with strife

*Exeunt [all but IAGO and CASSIO]*

IAGO What, are you hurt Lieutenant?

CAS Ay, past all surgery

IAGO Marry, God forbid!

CAS Reputation reputation, reputation! O, I  
have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal  
part of myself and what remains is bestial My repu-  
tation Iago, my reputation!

250 IAGO As I am an honest man I had thought you  
had received some bodily wound there is more  
sense in that than in reputation Reputation is an  
idle and most false imposition oft got without merit  
and lost without deserving You have lost no reputa-  
tion at all unless you repute yourself such a loser  
What man! there are ways to recover the General  
agam You are but now cast in his mood, a punish-  
ment more in policy than in malice even so as one  
would beat his offenceless dog to affright an im-  
perious lion Sue to him agam and hes yours

260 CAS I will rather sue to be despised than to

deceive so good a commander with so slight so  
drunken and so indiscreet an officer Drunk? and  
speak parrot? and squabble? swagge? swear? and  
discourse fustian with ones own shadow? O thou  
invisible spirit of wine, if thou hast no name to be  
known by let us call thee devil!

IAGO What was he that you followed with your  
sword? What had he done to you?

CAS I know not

IAGO Is't possible?

CAS I remember a mass of things but nothing 270  
distinctly, a quarrel but nothing wherefore O God  
that men should put an enemy in their mouths to  
steal away their brains! that we should with joy  
pleasance, revel, and applause transform ourselves  
into beasts!

IAGO Why but you are now well enough How  
came you thus recovered?

CAS It hath pleased the devil drunkenness to  
give place to the devil wrath One unperfectness  
shows me another, to make me frankly despise my  
self

IAGO Come, you are too severe a moraler As 280  
the time the place and the condition of this country  
stands, I could heartily wish this had not so befallen  
but since it is as it is mend it for your own good

CAS I will ask him for my place agam he shall  
tell me I am a drunkard! Had I as many mouths as  
Hydra such an answer would stop them all To be  
now a sensible man by and by a fool and presently  
a beast! O strange! Every inordinate cup is unblest  
and the ingredient is a devil

IAGO Come come! Good wine is a good familiar 290  
creature if it be well used, exclaim no more against  
it And, good Lieutenant I think you think I love  
you

CAS I have well approved it, sir I drunk!

IAGO You or any man living may be drunk at a  
time man I'll tell you what you shall do Our Gen-  
erals wife is now the General I may say so in this  
respect for that he hath devoted and given up  
himself to the contemplation, mark and denotement  
of her parts and graces Confess yourself freely to  
her, importune her help to put you in your place  
agam She is of so free so kind, so apt so blessed a  
disposition she holds it a vice in her goodness not 300  
to do more than she is requested This broken joint  
between you and her husband entreat her to splinter  
and my fortunes against any lay worth naming this  
crack of your love shall grow stronger than twas  
before

CAS You advise me well

241 vilde vile 251 sense feeling 252 false imposition unreliable  
attribution 255 recover win back cast dismissed 256 mood anger  
258 imperious royal

261 slight worthless 263 fustian nonsense 273 applause desire to  
please 285 Hydra a many headed monster 288 ingredient con-  
tents 289 familiar useful 292 approved it proved it by experience  
297 mark observing denotement pointing out parts good qualities  
299 free generous 302 splinter bind with splints 303 lay wager



IAGO I protest, in the sincerity of love and honest kindness

CAS I think it freely and betimes in the morning I will beseech the virtuous Desdemona to under-  
take for me I am desperate of my fortunes if they  
310 check me here

IAGO You are in the right Good night Lieu-  
tenant I must to the watch

CAS Good night honest Iago *Exit*

IAGO And what's he then that says I play the  
villain

When this advice is free I give and honest,  
Probal to thinking and indeed the course  
To win the Moor again? For tis most easy  
Th inclining Desdemona to subdue  
In any honest suit She's framed as fruitful  
320 As the free elements And then for her  
To win the Moor, were't to renounce his baptism,  
All seals and symbols of redeemed sin,  
His soul is so enfettered to her love  
That she may make unmake, do what she list  
Even as her appetite shall play the god  
With his weak function How am I then a villain  
To counsel Cassio to this parallel course,  
Directly to his good? Divinity of hell!  
When devils will the blackest sins put on,  
330 They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,  
As I do now For whiles this honest fool  
Pleads Desdemona to repair his fortune,  
And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,  
I'll pour this pestilence into his ear  
That she repeals him for her body's lust  
And by how much she strives to do him good  
She shall undo her credit with the Moor  
So will I turn her virtue into pitch  
And out of her own goodness make the net  
That shall enmesh them all

*Enter RODERIGO*

340 How now Roderigo!  
ROD I do follow here in the chase, not like a  
hound that hunts but one that fills up the cry My  
money is almost spent I have been tonight exceed-  
ingly well cudged and I think the issue will be I  
shall have so much experience for my pains and so,  
with no money at all and a little more wit, return  
again to Venice

IAGO How poor are they that have not patience!  
What wound did ever heal but by degrees?  
Thou know'st we work by wit and not by witchcraft,  
350 And wit depends on dilatory time  
Does't not go well? Cassio hath beaten thee

308 betimes early 310 check stop 315 free frank 316 Probal prob-  
able 318 subdue persuade 319 fruitful bountiful 325 appetite  
wishes 326 weak function easily moved powers 327 parallel well  
calculated 328 Divinity theology 329 put on incite 330 suggest  
tempt 335 repeals him seeks his reinstatement 342 cry prick

And thou by that small hurt hast cashiered Cassio  
Though other things grow fair against the sun  
Yet fruits that blossom first will first be ripe  
Content thyself awhile By th' mass, tis morning!  
Pleasure and action make the hours seem short  
Retire thee go where thou art billeted  
Away, I say thou shalt know more hereafter  
Nay get thee gone *Exit RODERIGO*

Two things are to be done  
My wife must move for Cassio to her mistress  
I'll set her on,  
360 Myself the while to draw the Moor apart  
And bring him jump when he may Cassio find  
Soliciting his wife Ay that's the way!  
Dull not device by coldness and delay *Exit*

### ACT III

#### SCENE I

*Enter CASSIO MUSICIANS and CLOWN*

CAS Masters, play here I will content your  
pains  
Something that's brief, and bid Good morrow, Gen-  
eral *[They play]*

CLOWN Why, masters, have you instruments  
been in Naples that they speak i th' nose thus?

MUS How sn! how!

CLOWN Aie these, I pray you, wind instruments?

MUS Ay marry are they sir

CLOWN O, thereby hangs a tail

MUS Whereby hangs a tale, sn?

CLOWN Marry sir by many a wind instrument 10  
that I know But, masters, here's money for you  
and the General so likes your music that he desires  
you, of all loves, to make no more noise with it

MUS Well sir we will not

CLOWN If you have any music that may not be  
heard, to't again But as they say, to hear music the  
General does not greatly care

MUS We have none such sir

CLOWN Then put up your pipes in your bag, for  
I'll away Go vanish into air, away! 20

*Exeunt MUSICIANS*

CAS Dost thou hear, my honest friend?

CLOWN No, I hear not your honest friend, I hear  
you

CAS Prithce keep up thy quilllets There's a  
poor piece of gold for thee If the gentlewoman that  
attends the General's wife be stirring tell her there's  
one Cassio entreats her a little favor of speech Wilt  
thou do this?

352 cashiered discharged 363 jump just 1 content reward 23  
quilllets legal quibbles

CLOWN She is stirring, sir If she will stir hither,  
I shall seem to notify unto her  
CAS Do, good my friend *Exit CLOWN*

*Enter IAGO*

In happy time Iago  
30 IAGO You have not been abed then?  
CAS Why, no the day had broke  
Before we parted I have made bold, Iago,  
To send in to your wife My suit to her  
Is that she will to virtuous Desdemona  
Procure me some access  
IAGO I'll send her to you presently,  
And I'll devise a mean to draw the Moor  
Out of the way that your converse and business  
May be more free  
CAS I humbly thank you for't *Exit [IAGO]*  
I never knew  
40 A Florentine more kind and honest

*Enter EMILIA*

EMIL Good morrow, good Lieutenant I am  
sorry  
For your displeasure, but all will sure be well  
The General and his wife are talking of it  
And she speaks for you stoutly The Moor replies  
That he you hurt is of great fame in Cyprus  
And great affinity and that in wholesome wisdom  
He might not but refuse you But he protests he  
loves you,  
And needs no other suitor but his likings  
To take the safest occasion by the front  
To bring you in again  
50 CAS Yet I beseech you  
If you think fit or that it may be done,  
Give me advantage of some brief discourse  
With Desdemona alone  
EMIL Pray you come in  
I will bestow you where you shall have time  
To speak your bosom freely  
CAS I am much bound to you *Exeunt*

## SCENE II

*Enter OTHELLO IAGO, and GENTLEMEN*

OTH These letters give, Iago, to the pilot  
And by him do my duties to the state  
That done, I will be walking on the works  
Repair there to me

IAGO Well, my good lord, I'll do't  
OTH This fortification, gentlemen, shall we see?  
GENT We'll wait upon your lordship *Exeunt*

## SCENE III

*Enter DESDEMONA CASSIO, and EMILIA*

DES Be thou assured good Cassio, I will do  
All my abilities in thy behalf

EMIL Good madam, do I warrant it grieves my  
husband

As if the cause were his

DES O that's an honest fellow Do not doubt  
Cassio

But I will have my lord and you again  
As friendly as you were

CAS Bounteous madam,  
Whatever shall become of Michael Cassio  
He's never anything but your true servant

DES I know't I thank you You do love my lord 10  
You have known him long and be you well assured  
He shall in strangeness stand no farther off  
Than in a politic distance

CAS Ay but, lady,  
That policy may either last so long  
Or feed upon such nice and waterish diet,  
Or breed itself so out of circumstance  
That I being absent and my place supplied,  
My General will forget my love and service

DES Do not doubt that Before Emilia here 20  
I give thee warrant of thy place Assure thee,  
If I do vow a friendship I'll perform it  
To the last article My lord shall never rest  
I'll watch him tame and talk him out of patience  
His bed shall seem a school his board a shrift  
I'll intermingle everything he does  
With Cassio's suit Therefore be merry Cassio  
For thy solicitor shall rather die  
Than give thy cause away

*Enter OTHELLO and IAGO*

EMIL Madam, here comes my lord

CAS Madam I'll take my leave 30

DES Why, stay and hear me speak

CAS Madam not now I am very ill at ease,  
Unfit for mine own purposes

DES Well do your discretion *Exit CASSIO*

IAGO Ha! I like not that

OTH What dost thou say?

IAGO Nothing my lord or if—I know not what

OTH Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?

IAGO Cassio my lord? No sure I cannot think it  
That he would steal away so guilty like  
Seeing your coming

OTH I do believe 'twas he 40

DES How now, my lord!

I have been talking with a suitor here,

29 In happy time well met 35 presently at once 36 mean way 42  
displeasure being out of favor 46 affinity kindred 47 might could  
49 occasion opportunity front forelock 55 your bosom what you  
have at heart 3 works fortifications

12 strangeness keeping aloof 13 politic required by wisdom 15  
nice and waterish diet trivial and thin reasons 16 breed renew  
19 doubt fear 23 watch him tame keep him awake till he gives in  
24 shrift confessional

A man that languishes in your displeasure

OTH Who is t you mean?

DES Why, your lieutenant, Cassio Good my lord,  
If I have any grace or power to move you  
His present reconciliation take  
For if he be not one that truly loves you  
That errs in ignorance and not in cunning,  
50 I have no judgment in an honest face  
I prithee call him back

OTH Went he hence now?

DES Yes, faith so humbled  
That he hath left part of his grief with me  
To suffer with him Good love call him back

OTH Not now, sweet Desdemona some other  
time

DES But shall t be shortly?

OTH The sooner sweet for you

DES Shall t be tonight at supper?

OTH No not tonight

DES Tomorrow dinner then?

OTH I shall not dine at home  
I meet the captains at the citadel

60 DES Why then, tomorrow night or Tuesday  
morn,

Or Tuesday noon or night, or Wednesday morn

I prithee name the time but let it not

Exceed three days In faith he's penitent

And yet his trespass, in our common reason—

Save that they say the wars must make examples  
Out of their best—is not almost a fault

T incur a private check When shall he come?

Tell me, Othello I wonder in my soul

What you would ask me that I should deny

70 Or stand so mammering on What! Michael Cassio  
That came a wooing with you and so many a time  
When I have spoke of you dispraisingly,

Hath taen you part to have so much to do

To bring him in? By lady I could do much—

OTH Prithee no more Let him come when he  
will

I will deny thee nothing

DES Why, this is not a boon

Tis as I should entreat you wear your gloves

Or feed on nourishing dishes or keep you warm,

Or sue to you to do a peculiar profit

80 To your own person Nay when I have a suit

Wherein I mean to touch your love indeed,

It shall be full of poise and difficult weight

And fearful to be granted

OTH I will deny thee nothing  
Whereon I do beseech thee grant me this

To leave me but a little to myself

DES Shall I deny you? No Farewell, my lord

OTH Farewell, my Desdemona I'll come to thee  
straight

DES Emilia, come Be as your fancies teach you  
Whate'er you be, I am obedient

*Exeunt DESDEMONA and EMILIA*

OTH Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul 9  
But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,

Chaos is come again

IAGO My noble lord—

OTH What dost thou say, Iago?

IAGO Did Michael Cassio when you wooed my  
lady

Know of your love?

OTH He did, from first to last Why dost thou  
ask?

IAGO But for a satisfaction of my thought  
No further harm

OTH Why of thy thought Iago?

IAGO I did not think he had been acquainted  
with her

OTH O yes and went between us very oft 100

IAGO Indeed?

OTH Indeed? Ay indeed Discern'st thou aught  
in that?

Is he not honest?

IAGO Honest my lord?

OTH Honest? Ay honest

IAGO My lord, for aught I know

OTH What dost thou think?

IAGO Think my lord?

OTH Think, my lord! By heaven, he echoes me  
As if there were some monster in his thought

Too hideous to be shown Thou dost mean some  
thing

I heard thee say even now thou lik'st not that,  
When Cassio left my wife What didst not like? 110

And when I told thee he was of my counsel

In my whole course of wooing thou criest Indeed?

And didst contract and purse thy brow together

As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain

Some horrible conceit If thou dost love me,

Show me thy thought

IAGO My lord, you know I love you

OTH I think thou dost  
And for I know thou art full of love and honesty

And weigh'st thy words before thou giv'st them  
breath,

Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more 120

For such things in a false disloyal knave

Are tricks of custom but in a man that's just

They're close dilations working from the heart

That passion cannot rule

IAGO For Michael Cassio,  
I dare be sworn I think that he is honest

47 present immediate 66 not almost hardly 67 check reprimand  
70 mammering hesitating 74 By lady by Our Lady 79 peculiar  
profit private benefit 81 touch test

111 of my counsel in my confidence 115 conceit idea 122 of custom  
customary 123 close dilations secret tokens of emotion 124 That  
passion cannot rule that cannot restrain its emotion

OTH I think so too  
 IAGO Men should be what they seem  
 O! those that be not would they might seem none!  
 OTH Certain, men should be what they seem  
 IAGO Why then I think Cassio's an honest man  
 130 OTH Nay yet there's more in this  
 I prithee speak to me as to thy thinkings,  
 As thou dost ruminate, and give thy worst of  
 thoughts  
 The worst of words  
 IAGO Good my lord, pardon me  
 Though I am bound to every act of duty  
 I am not bound to that all slaves are free to  
 Utter my thoughts? Why say they are vile and  
 false?  
 As where's that palace whereinto foul things  
 Sometimes intrude not? Who has a breast so pure  
 But some uncleanly apprehensions  
 140 Keep leets and law days and in sessions sit  
 With meditations lawful?  
 OTH Thou dost conspire against thy friend Iago  
 If thou but think'st him wronged and mak'st his ear  
 A stranger to thy thoughts  
 IAGO I do beseech you  
 Though I perchance am vicious in my guess  
 As I confess it is my nature's plague  
 To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy  
 Shapes faults that are not that your wisdom  
 From one that so imperfectly conjects  
 150 Would take no notice, nor build yourself a trouble  
 Out of his scattering and unsure observance  
 It were not for your quiet nor your good,  
 Nor for my manhood, honesty or wisdom  
 To let you know my thoughts  
 OTH What dost thou mean?  
 IAGO Good name in man and woman, dear my  
 lord,  
 Is the immediate jewel of their souls  
 Who steals my purse steals trash 'tis something,  
 nothing  
 'Twas mine 'tis his and has been slave to thou-  
 sands  
 But he that filches from me my good name  
 160 Robs me of that which not enriches him  
 And makes me poor indeed  
 OTH By heaven I'll know thy thoughts!  
 IAGO You cannot if my heart were in your hand  
 Nor shall not whilst 'tis in my custody  
 OTH Ha!  
 IAGO O beware my lord of jealousy!  
 It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock  
 The meat it feeds on That cuckold lives in bliss  
 Who certain of his fate loves not his wronger,  
 But O what damned minutes tells he o'er

Who dotes yet doubts suspects yet strongly loves! 170  
 OTH O misery!  
 IAGO Poor and content is rich and rich enough  
 But riches fineless is as poor as winter  
 To him that ever fears he shall be poor  
 Good God the souls of all my tribe defend  
 From jealousy!  
 OTH Why why is this?  
 Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy,  
 To follow still the changes of the moon  
 With fresh suspicions? No! To be once in doubt  
 Is once to be resolved Exchange me for a goat 180  
 When I shall turn the business of my soul  
 To such exsufficate and blown surmises  
 Matching thy inference 'Tis not to make me jealous  
 To say my wife is fair feeds well loves company  
 Is free of speech sings plays and dances well  
 Where virtue is these are more virtuous  
 Nor from mine own weak merits will I draw  
 The smallest fear or doubt of her revolt  
 For she had eyes and chose me No Iago  
 I'll see before I doubt when I doubt prove 190  
 And on the proof there is no more but this  
 Away at once with love or jealousy!  
 IAGO I am glad of this for now I shall have  
 reason  
 To show the love and duty that I bear you  
 With franker spirit Therefore as I am bound  
 Receive it from me I speak not yet of proof  
 Look to your wife observe her well with Cassio,  
 Wear your eye thus not jealous nor secure  
 I would not have you free and noble nature  
 Out of self-bounty be abused look to t 200  
 I know our country disposition well  
 In Venice they do let God see the planks  
 They dare not show their husbands their best con-  
 science  
 Is not to leave't undone but keep't unknown  
 OTH Dost thou say so?  
 IAGO She did deceive her father marrying you  
 And when she seemed to shake and fear your looks  
 She loved them most  
 OTH And so she did  
 IAGO Why go to then  
 She that so young could give out such a seeming  
 To seal her father's eyes up close as oak 210  
 He thought 'twas witchcraft—but I am much to  
 blame  
 I humbly do beseech you of your pardon  
 For too much loving you  
 OTH I am bound to thee for ever  
 IAGO I see this hath a little dashed your spirits  
 OTH Not a jot not a jot

139 apprehensions imaginary notions 140 leets and law days oc-  
 casional court sittings 145 vicious wrong 147 jealousy suspicion  
 149 conjects conjectures 156 immediate nearest the heart

173 fineless boundless 178 still continually 180 once to be resolved  
 once and for all to find out the truth 182 exsufficate and blown  
 puffed up and exaggerated 185 inference statement 188 revolt  
 unfaithfulness 190 prove test 198 secure overconfident 200 self  
 bounty its own goodness 210 seal close

IAGO I faith I fear it has  
 I hope you will consider what is spoke  
 Comes from my love—but I do see y are moved  
 I am to pray you not to strain my speech  
 To grosser issues nor to larger reach  
 220 Than to suspicion  
 OTH I will not  
 IAGO Should you do so my lord  
 My speech should fall into such vild success  
 Which my thoughts aimed not Cassio's my worthy  
 friend—  
 My lord, I see y are moved  
 OTH No not much moved  
 I do not think but Desdemona's honest  
 IAGO Long live she so! and long live you to  
 think so!  
 OTH And yet how nature erring from itself—  
 IAGO Ay, there's the point as—to be bold with  
 you—  
 Not to affect many proposed matches  
 230 Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,  
 Whereto we see in all things nature tends—  
 Foh! one may smell in such a will most rank,  
 Foul disproportion thoughts unnatural—  
 But pardon me I do not in position  
 Distinctly speak of her though I may fear  
 Her will recoiling to her better judgment  
 May fall to match you with her country foams  
 And happily repent  
 OTH Farewell, farewell  
 If more thou dost perceive let me know more  
 240 Set on thy wife to observe Leave me Iago  
 IAGO My lord, I take my leave [*Starts to go out*]  
 OTH Why did I marry? This honest creature  
 doubtless  
 Sees and knows more, much more than he unfolds  
 IAGO [*returns*] My lord I would I might entreat  
 your honor  
 To scan this thing no farther leave it to time  
 Although 'tis fit that Cassio have his place,  
 For sure he fills it up with great ability  
 Yet if you please to hold him off awhile  
 You shall by that perceive him and his means  
 250 Note if your lady strain his entertainment  
 With any strong or vehement importunity  
 Much will be seen in that In the mean time  
 Let me be thought too busy in my fears—  
 As worthy cause I have to fear I am—  
 And hold her free I do beseech you honor  
 OTH Fear not my government  
 IAGO I once more take my leave

Exit

219 grosser issues greater results 222 vild success bad consequences 225 honest chaste 229 affect care for 230 complexion color 232 will desire rank unhealthy 234 position positive assertion 235 Distinctly specifically 236 recoiling reverting 237 fall chance 238 happily perhaps 250 strain urge entertainment reinstatement 253 too busy too much a busybody 255 free innocent 256 government self control

OTH This fellow's of exceeding honesty  
 And knows all qualities with a learned spirit  
 Of human dealings If I do prove her haggard  
 260 Though that her jesses were my dear heartstrings  
 I'd whistle her off and let her down the wind  
 To prey at fortune Haply for I am black  
 And have not those soft parts of conversation  
 That chamberers have or for I am declined  
 Into the vale of years—yet that's not much—  
 She's gone I am abused and my relief  
 Must be to loathe her O curse of marriage  
 That we can call these delicate creatures ours  
 And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad  
 270 And live upon the vapor of a dungeon  
 Than keep a corner in the thing I love  
 For others uses Yet 'tis the plague of great ones  
 Prerogatives are they less than the base  
 'Tis destiny unshunnable like death  
 Even then this forked plague is fated to us  
 When we do quicken

Enter DESDEMONA and EMILIA

Look where she comes!  
 If she be false O then heaven mocks itself!  
 I'll not believe it  
 DES How now my dear Othello!  
 280 You dinner and the generous islanders  
 By you invited do attend your presence  
 OTH I am to blame  
 DES Why do you speak so faintly?  
 Are you not well?  
 OTH I have a pain upon my forehead here  
 DES Faith that's with witching twill away  
 again  
 Let me but bind it hard within this hour  
 It will be well  
 OTH Your napkin is too little  
 [*He puts the handkerchief from him and it drops*]  
 Let it alone Come I'll go in with you  
 DES I am very sorry that you are not well  
 Exeunt OTHELLO and DESDEMONA  
 290 EMIL I am glad I have found this napkin  
 This was her first remembrance from the Moor  
 My wayward husband hath a hundred times  
 Wooed me to steal it but she so loves the token—  
 For he conjured her she should ever keep it—  
 That she reserves it evermore about her  
 To kiss and talk to I'll have the work taken out  
 And give it Iago

259 qualities natures learned spirit mind full of knowledge 260 haggard wild 261 jesses straps on a hawk's leash 263 prey at fortune shift for herself Haply for perhaps because 264 parts of conversation qualities of behavior 265 chamberers ladies men 274 Prerogatives specially privileged base lowly 276 forked plague horns imagined to grow on a betrayed husband 277 quicken begin to live 280 generous noble 281 attend await 285 watching staying awake 287 napkin handkerchief 288 Let it alone don't bother about my head 292 wayward capricious 293 Wooed urged 294 For because 296 work taken out embroidery copied

What he will do with it heaven knows not I,  
I nothing but to please his fantasy

*Enter IAGO*

300 IAGO How now! What do you here alone?  
EMIL Do not you chide I have a thing for you  
IAGO A thing for me! It is a common thing—  
EMIL Ha?  
IAGO To have a foolish wife  
EMIL O is that all? What will you give me now  
For that same handkerchief?  
IAGO What handkerchief?  
EMIL What handkerchief!  
Why that the Moor first gave to Desdemona  
That which so often you did bid me steal  
310 IAGO Hast stol'n it from her?  
EMIL No faith she let it drop by negligence,  
And to th' advantage I being here took't up  
Look, here it is  
IAGO A good wench give it me  
[*Takes the handkerchief*]  
EMIL What will you do with't that you have  
been so earnest  
To have me filch it?  
IAGO Why what's that to you?  
EMIL If it be not for some purpose of import  
Give't me again. Poor lad she'll run mad  
When she shall lack it  
IAGO Be not acknown on't  
320 I have use for it. Go leave me. *Exit EMILIA*  
I will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin  
And let him find it. Trifles light as air  
Are to the jealous confirmations strong  
As proofs of holy writ. This may do something  
The Moor already changes with my poison.  
Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons  
Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,  
But with a little act upon the blood  
Burn like the mines of sulphur.

*Enter OTHELLO*

I did say so  
330 Look where he comes! Not poppy nor mandragora,  
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world  
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep  
Which thou owedst yesterday  
OTH Ha! ha! false to me?  
IAGO Why how now General? No more of that  
OTH Avaunt! be gone! Thou hast set me on the  
rack  
I swear 'tis better to be much abused  
Than but to know't a little  
IAGO How now, my lord!

OTH What sense had I of her stol'n hours of lust?  
I saw't not thought it not it harmed not me  
I slept the next night well fed well was free and 340  
meny  
I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips  
He that is robbed not wanting what is stol'n  
Let him not know't and he's not robbed at all  
IAGO I am sorry to hear this  
OTH I had been happy if the general camp  
Pioners and all had tasted her sweet body  
So I had nothing known. O now for ever  
Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!  
Farewell the plumed troops and the big wars  
That makes ambition virtue! O farewell 350  
Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill tump,  
The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife  
The royal banner and all quality  
Pride pomp and circumstance of glorious war!  
And O you mortal engines whose rude throats  
Th' immortal Jove's dread clamors counterfeit,  
Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone!  
IAGO Is't possible, my lord?  
OTH Villain be sure thou prove my love a  
whore  
Be sure of it give me the ocular proof 360  
Or by the worth of mine eternal soul  
Thou hadst been better have been born a dog  
Than answer my waked wrath!  
IAGO Is't come to this?  
OTH Make me to see't or at the least so prove it  
That the probation bear no hinge nor loop  
To hang a doubt on or woe upon thy life!  
IAGO My noble lord—  
OTH If you dost slander her and torture me,  
Never pray more abandon all remorse,  
On horrors heard horrors accumulate, 370  
Do deeds to make heaven weep, all earth amazed  
For nothing canst thou to damnation add  
Greater than that  
IAGO O grace! O heaven forgive me!  
Are you a man? Have you a soul or sense?  
God buy you, take mine office. O wretched fool  
That liv'st to make thine honesty a vice!  
O monstrous world! Take note take note, O world,  
To be direct and honest is not safe  
I thank you for this profit, and from hence  
I'll love no friend sith love breeds such offence 380  
OTH Nay stay Thou shouldst be honest  
IAGO I should be wise, for honesty's a fool  
And loses that it works for  
OTH By the world  
I think my wife be honest and think she is not  
I think that thou art just, and think thou art not

299 fantasy fancy 316 import importance 318 lack miss 319 Be not  
acknowledged on't don't admit knowing of it 326 conceits ideas 330  
mandragora a medicine causing sleep 333 owedst hadst 336 abused  
deceived 337 but only

338 sense feeling 340 free carefree 342 wanting missing 346 Pioners  
laborers 354 circumstance ceremony 355 mortal engines deadly at  
tillery 356 counterfeit imitate 365 probation proof 369 remorse  
pity 375 God buy you goodbye 379 profit lesson

I'll have some proof Her name that was as fresh  
As Dian's visage is now begrimed and black  
As mine own face If there be cords or knives  
Poison or fire or suffocating streams

390 I'll not endure it Would I were satisfied!

IAGO I see sir, you are eaten up with passion  
I do repent me that I put it to you  
You would be satisfied?

OTH Would! nay, I will

IAGO And may but how? how satisfied my lord?  
Would you, the supervisor grossly gape on?  
Behold her topped?

OTH Death and damnation! O!

IAGO It were a tedious difficulty I think  
To bring them to that prospect Damn them then  
If ever mortal eyes do see them bolster  
400 More than their own! What then? How then?  
What shall I say? Where's satisfaction?  
It is impossible you should see this

Were they as prime as goats as hot as monkeys,  
As salt as wolves in pride and fools as gross  
As ignorance made drunk But yet I say  
If imputation and strong circumstances  
Which lead directly to the door of truth  
Will give you satisfaction you may have it

OTH Give me a living reason she's disloyal

410 IAGO I do not like the office

But sith I am entered in this cause so far  
Picked to it by foolish honesty and love  
I will go on I lay with Cassio lately  
And being troubled with a raging tooth,  
I could not sleep

There are a kind of men so loose of soul  
That in their sleeps will mutter their affairs  
One of this kind is Cassio

In sleep I heard him say Sweet Desdemona

420 Let us be wary let us hide our loves!

And then sir would he gripe and wring my hand,  
Cry O sweet creature! then kiss me hard  
As if he plucked up kisses by the roots  
That grew upon my lips laid his leg o'er my thigh,  
And sighed, and kissed and then cried Cursed fate,  
That gave thee to the Moor!

OTH O monstrous! monstrous!

IAGO Nay this was but his dream

OTH But this denoted a foregone conclusion  
Tis a shrewd doubt though it be but a dream

430 IAGO And this may help to thicken other proofs  
That do demonstrate thinly

OTH I'll tear her all to pieces!

IAGO Nay but be wise, yet we see nothing done  
She may be honest yet Tell me but this—

Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief  
Spotted with strawberries in your wife's hand?

OTH I gave her such a one 'twas my first gift

IAGO I know not that but such a handkerchief—  
I am sure it was your wife's—did I today  
See Cassio wipe his beard with

OTH If it be that—

IAGO If it be that or any that was hers  
It speaks against her with the other proofs

OTH O that the slave had forty thousand lives!  
One is too poor too weak for my revenge

Now do I see 'tis true Look here Iago  
All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven  
Tis gone

Arise black vengeance from the hollow hell!  
Yield up O love thy crown and hearted throne  
To tyrannous hate! Swell bosom with thy fraught  
For 'tis of aspics' tongues!

IAGO Yet be content

OTH O blood blood blood!

IAGO Patience I say Your mind perhaps may  
change

OTH Never Iago Like to the Pontic Sea  
Whose icy current and compulsive course  
Ne'er knows retiring ebb but keeps due on  
To the Propontic and the Hellespont  
Even so my bloody thoughts with violent pace  
Shall ne'er look back ne'er ebb to humble love  
Till that a capable and wide revenge

Swallow them up (*He kneels*) Now by yond  
marble heaven

In the due reverence of a sacred vow

I here engage my words

IAGO Do not rise yet

*IAGO kneels*

Witness you ever burning lights above

You elements that clip us round about

Witness that here Iago doth give up

The execution of his wit hands heart

To wronged Othello's service! Let him command

And to obey shall be in me remorse

What bloody business ever [*They rise*]

OTH I greet thy love

Not with vain thanks but with acceptance bound  
teous,

And will upon the instant put thee to it

Within these three days let me hear thee say

That Cassio's not alive

IAGO My friend is dead, 'tis done at your request  
But let her live

OTH Damn her lewd minx! O damn her!

Come go with me apart, I will withdraw

To furnish me with some swift means of death

390 satisfied aware of the whole truth 395 supervisor spectator  
398 prospect sight 399 bolster lie together 401 satisfaction con-  
vincing evidence 403 prime lecherous 404 salt lustful pride heat  
406 circumstances pieces of evidence 411 sith since 428 foregone  
conclusion past experience 429 shrewd doubt wickedly suspicious  
thing

449 fraught burden 450 aspics serpents 453 Pontic Sea Black  
Sea 454 compulsive irresistible 455 retiring retreating 459 capable  
capacious 462 engage pledge 464 clip embrace 466 execution action  
wit mind 468 remorse pity 1 lies lodges



For the fall devil Now art thou my lieutenant  
 IAGO I am your own for ever *Exeunt*

## SCENE IV

*Enter DESDEMONA EMILIA, and CLOWN*

DES Do you know somehow where Lieutenant  
 CASSIO lies?

CLOWN I dare not say he lies anywhere

DES Why man?

CLOWN He's a soldier, and for me to say a soldier  
 lies 'tis stabbing

DES Go to Where lodges he?

CLOWN To tell you where he lodges is to tell you  
 where I lie

DES Can anything be made of this?

10 CLOWN I know not where he lodges and for me  
 to devise a lodging, and say he lies here or he lies  
 there were to lie in mine own throat

DES Can you inquire him out, and be edified by  
 report?

CLOWN I will catechize the world for him that  
 is make questions and by them answer

DES Seek him bid him come hither Tell him  
 I have moved my lord on his behalf and hope all  
 will be well

CLOWN To do this is within the compass of man's  
 wit and therefore I will attempt the doing it *Exit*

20 DES Where should I lose that handkerchief  
 Emilia?

EMIL I know not, madam

DES Believe me I had rather have lost my purse  
 Full of crusadoes, and but my noble Moor  
 Is true of mind and made of no such baseness  
 As jealous creatures are it were enough  
 To put him to ill thinking

EMIL Is he not jealous?

DES Who he? I think the sun where he was born  
 Drew all such humors from him

*Enter OTHELLO*

EMIL Look where he comes

DES I will not leave him now till Cassio  
 30 Be called to him How is't with you my lord?

OTH Well my good lady [*Aside*] O hardness to  
 dissemble!

How do you, Desdemona?

DES Well my good lord

OTH Give me your hand This hand is moist  
 my lady

DES It yet hath felt no age nor known no sorrow

OTH This argues fruitfulness and liberal heart  
 Hot hot and moist This hand of yours requires  
 A sequester from liberty, fasting and prayer,

17 moved spoken to 23 crusadoes gold coins 28 humors tendencies  
 37 sequester withdrawal

Much castigation exercise devout  
 For here's a young and sweating devil here  
 That commonly rebels 'Tis a good hand,  
 A frank one

DES You may indeed say so,

For 'twas that hand that gave away my heart

OTH A liberal hand The hearts of old gave  
 hands,

But our new heraldry is hands not hearts

DES I cannot speak of this Come now your  
 promise

OTH What promise chuck?

DES I have sent to bid Cassio come speak with  
 you

OTH I have a salt and sorry rheum offends me  
 Lend me thy handkerchief

DES Here, my lord

OTH That which I gave you

DES I have it not about me 50

OTH Not?

DES No faith, my lord

OTH That's a fault

That handkerchief

Did an Egyptian to my mother give

She was a churmer and could almost read

The thoughts of people She told her while she kept  
 it

'Twould make her amiable and subdue my father

Entirely to her love but if she lost it

O! made a gift of it my father's eye

Should hold her loathed and his spirits should hunt

After new fancies She dying gave it me

And bid me when my fate would have me wived

To give it her I did so and take heed on't,

Make it a darling like your precious eye

To lose't or give't away were such perdition

As nothing else could match

DES Is it possible?

OTH 'Tis true There's magic in the web of it

A sibyl that had numbered in the world

The sun to course two hundred compasses

In her prophetic fury sewed the work

The worms were hallowed that did breed the silk,

And it was dyed in mummy which the skilful

Conserved of maidens hearts

DES I faith, is't true?

OTH Most veritable therefore look to't well

DES Then would to God that I had never seen't!

OTH Ha! Wherefore?

DES Why do you speak so startingly and rash?

OTH Is't lost? Is't gone? Speak, is it out o' th'  
 way?

DES Heaven bless us!

38 castigation self punishment exercise religious observances 41  
 frank generous 48 sorry rheum wretched cold 53 Egyptian gipsy  
 56 amiable lovable 60 fancies loves 64 perdition disaster 68 com  
 passes yearly circuits 69 fury inspiration 71 mummy liquid from  
 dried flesh 76 startingly abruptly rash suddenly

OTH Say you?<sup>88</sup>  
 80 DES It is not lost, but what and if it were?  
 OTH How!  
 DES I say it is not lost  
 OTH Fetch t let me see t!  
 DES Why so I can sh, but I will not now  
 This is a trick to put me from my suit  
 Pray you let Cassio be received again  
 OTH Fetch me the handkerchief! My mind mis  
 gives  
 DES Come, come  
 You ll never meet a more sufficient man  
 OTH The handkerchief!  
 DES I pray talk me of Cassio  
 OTH The handkerchief!  
 90 DES A man that all his time  
 Hath founded his good fortunes on your love  
 Shared dangers with you—  
 OTH The handkerchief!  
 DES I faith you are to blame  
 OTH Away! *Exit*  
 EMIL Is not this man jealous?  
 DES I ne er saw this before  
 Sure there s some wonder in this handkerchief  
 I am most unhappy in the loss of it  
 100 EMIL Tis not a year or two shows us a man  
 They are all but stomachs and we all but food  
 They eat us hungerly and when they are full  
 They belch us  
  
*Enter IAGO and CASSIO*  
 Look you Cassio and my husband  
 IAGO There is no other way tis she must do t  
 And lo the happiness! Go and importune her  
 DES How now, good Cassio? What s the news  
 with you?<sup>89</sup>  
 CAS Madam, my former suit I do beseech you  
 That by your virtuous means I may again  
 Exist, and be a member of his love  
 110 Whom I with all the office of my heart  
 Entirely honor I would not be delayed  
 If my offence be of such mortal kind  
 That nor my service past nor present sorrows,  
 Nor purposed merit in futurity  
 Can ransom me into his love again  
 But to know so must be my benefit  
 So shall I clothe me in a forced content  
 And shut myself up in some other course  
 To Fortune s alms  
 DES Alas, thrice gentle Cassio,  
 120 My advocacy is not now in tune  
 My lord is not my lord, nor should I know him  
 Were he in favor as in humor altered

88 sufficient able 99 unhappy unlucky 105 happiness good luck 109 member of sharer in 110 office devotion 112 mortal fatal 116 But only 119 To Fortune s alms taking what I can get 120 advocacy speaking in favor 122 favor features humor disposition

So help me every spirit sanctified  
 As I have spoken for you all my best  
 And stood within the blank of his displeasure  
 For my free speech! You must awhile be patient  
 What I can do I will and more I will  
 Than for myself I dare Let that suffice you  
 IAGO Is my lord angry?  
 EMIL He went hence but now  
 And certainly in strange unquietness  
 IAGO Can he be angry? I have seen the cannon  
 When it hath blown his ranks into the air  
 And like the devil from his very arm  
 Puffed his own brother—and is he angry?  
 Something of moment then I will go meet him  
 There s matter in t indeed if he be angry  
 DES I prithee do so *Exit [IAGO]*  
 Something sure of state  
 Either from Venice or some unhatched practice  
 Made demonstrable here in Cyprus to him,  
 Hath puddled his clear spirit, and in such cases  
 140 Men s natures wrangle with inferior things  
 Though great ones are their object Tis even so  
 For let our finger ache and it endues  
 Our other healthful members even to that sense  
 Of pain Nay we must think men are not gods  
 Nor of them look for such observancy  
 As fits the bridal Beshrew me much Emilia  
 I was unhandsome warrior as I am  
 Arraigning his unkindness with my soul,  
 But now I find I had suborned the witness  
 150 And he s indicted falsely  
 EMIL Pray heaven it be state matters as you  
 think,  
 And no conception nor no jealous toy  
 Concerning you  
 DES Alas the day I never gave him cause  
 EMIL But jealous souls will not be answered so  
 They are not ever jealous for the cause  
 But jealous for they re jealous Tis a monster  
 Begot upon itself born on itself  
 DES Heaven keep that monster from Othello s  
 160 mind!  
 EMIL Lady, amen  
 DES I will go seek him Cassio, walk hereabout  
 If I do find him fit, I ll move your suit  
 And seek to effect it to my uttermost  
 CAS I humbly thank your ladyship  
*Exeunt DESDEMONA and EMILIA*  
  
*Enter BIANCA*  
 BIAN Save you friend Cassio!  
 CAS What make you from home?  
 How is it with you my most fair Bianca?

125 within the blank in direct line of aim 137 state public affairs 138 unhatched practice uncompleted plot 140 puddled disturbed 143 endues brings 146 observancy devoted attention 148 unhandsome unfair 150 suborned the witness induced him to swear falsely 153 toy fancy

I faith, sweet love, I was coming to your house  
 BIAN And I was going to your lodging Cassio  
 170 What! Keep a week away? seven days and nights?  
 Eightscore eight hours? and lovers absent hours,  
 More tedious than the dial eightscore times?  
 O weary reckoning!  
 CAS Pardon me, Bianca  
 I have this while with leaden thoughts been pressed  
 But I shall in a more continue time  
 Strike off this score of absence Sweet Bianca  
 [Gives her DESDEMONA'S handkerchief]  
 Take me this work out  
 BIAN O Cassio, whence came this?  
 This is some token from a newer friend  
 To the felt absence now I feel a cause  
 Ist come to this? Well well  
 180 CAS Go to woman!  
 Throw your vild guesses in the devil's teeth  
 From whence you have them You are jealous now  
 That this is from some mistress some remembrance  
 No by my faith Bianca  
 BIAN Why, whose is it?  
 CAS I know not sweet I found it in my cham-  
 ber  
 I like the work well Ere it be demanded  
 As like enough it will I'd have it copied  
 Take it and do't and leave me for this time  
 BIAN Leave you! Wherefore?  
 190 CAS I do attend here on the General  
 And think it no addition nor my wish  
 To have him see me womaned  
 BIAN Why, I pray you?  
 CAS Not that I love you not  
 BIAN But that you do not love me  
 I pray you bring me on the way a little,  
 And say if I shall see you soon at night  
 CAS 'Tis but a little way that I can bring you  
 For I attend here but I'll see you soon  
 BIAN 'Tis very good I must be circumstanced  
 Exeunt

# ACT IV

## SCENE I

Enter OTHELLO and IAGO

IAGO Will you think so?  
 OTH Think so Iago!  
 IAGO What,  
 To kiss in private?  
 OTH An unauthorized kiss

1/2 the dial the clock's hours 175 continue uninterrupted 176 score reckoning 177 Take me this work out copy this embroidery for me 191 addition credit 194 bring go with 195 soon at night this night 198 be circumstanced put up with it

IAGO Or to be naked with her friend abed  
 An hour or more not meaning any harm?  
 OTH Naked abed, Iago and not mean harm!  
 It is hypocrisy against the devil  
 They that mean virtuously and yet do so,  
 The devil their virtue tempts and they tempt  
 heaven  
 IAGO So they do nothing 'tis a venial slip  
 But if I give my wife a handkerchief—  
 10 OTH What then?  
 IAGO Why, then 'tis hers my lord, and being  
 hers,  
 She may, I think bestow't on any man  
 OTH She is protectress of her honor too  
 May she give that?  
 IAGO Her honor is an essence that's not seen  
 They have it very oft that have it not  
 But for the handkerchief—  
 OTH By heaven, I would most gladly have for-  
 got it!  
 Thou said'st—O it comes o'er my memory  
 20 As doth the raven o'er the infectious house,  
 Boding to all—he had my handkerchief  
 IAGO Ay what of that?  
 OTH That's not so good now  
 IAGO What  
 If I had said I had seen him do you wrong?  
 Or heard him say—as knaves be such abroad  
 Who having by their own importunate suit  
 Or voluntary dotage of some mistress  
 Convinced or supplied them cannot choose  
 But they must blab—  
 OTH Hath he said anything?  
 IAGO He hath my lord, but be you well assured  
 30 No more than he'll unsweat  
 OTH What hath he said?  
 IAGO Faith that he did—I know not what he did  
 OTH What? what?  
 IAGO Lie—  
 OTH With her?  
 IAGO With her, on her what you will  
 OTH Lie with her! lie on her! We say lie on her  
 when they belie her Lie with her! Zounds, that's  
 fulsome Handkerchief! Confessions! Handkerchief!  
 To confess and be hanged for his labor—first to be  
 hanged, and then to confess! I tremble at it Nature  
 would not invest herself in such shadowing passion  
 without some instruction It is not words that shakes  
 40 me thus Pish! Noses ears and lips! Is't possible?  
 Confess! Handkerchief! O devil! Falls in a trance  
 IAGO Work on  
 My medicine work! Thus credulous fools are caught,  
 And many worthy and chaste dames even thus,

21 infectious plague stricken 22 Boding foretelling evil 28 Convinced prevailed upon supplied satisfied 36 belie slander 39 invest herself in such shadowing passion feel such overpowering emotion 40 instruction authority

All guiltless meet reproach What ho! my lord!  
My lord I say! Othello!

*Enter CASSIO*

How now, Cassio!

CAS What's the matter?

IAGO My lord is fallen into an epilepsy  
50 This is his second fit he had one yesterday

CAS Rub him about the temples

IAGO No forbear  
The lethargy must have his quiet course  
If not he foams at mouth and by and by  
Breaks out to savage madness Look he stuns  
Do you withdraw yourself a little while  
He will recover straight When he is gone  
I would on great occasion speak with you

*Exit CASSIO*

How is it General? Have you not hurt your head?

OTH Dost thou mock me?

IAGO I mock you! No by heaven  
60 Would you would bear your fortune like a man!

OTH A horned man's a monster and a beast

IAGO There's many a beast then in a populous  
city

And many a civil monster

OTH Did he confess it?

IAGO Good sir, be a man  
Think every bearded fellow that's but yoked  
May draw with you There's millions now alive  
That nightly lie in those unpropped beds  
Which they dare swear peculiar Your case is better  
O 'tis the spite of hell the fiend's arch mock  
70 To lip a wanton in a secure couch  
And to suppose her chaste! No let me know  
And knowing what I am I know what she shall be

OTH O thou art wise 'tis certain

IAGO Stand you awhile apart  
Confine yourself but in a patient list  
Whilst you were here overwhelmed with your grief—  
A passion most unsuited such a man—  
Cassio came hither I shifted him away  
And laid good scuse upon your ecstasy  
Bade him anon return and here speak with me  
80 The which he promised Do but encave yourself  
And mark the fleers the gibes and notable scorns  
That dwell in every region of his face  
For I will make him tell the tale anew—  
Where how how oft how long ago and when  
He hath and is again to cope your wife  
I say but mark his gesture Marry patience  
Or I shall say you are all in all in spleen  
And nothing of a man

OTH Dost thou hear Iago?

I will be found most cunning in my patience,  
But—dost thou hear?—most bloody

IAGO

That's not amiss 90

But yet keep time in all Will you withdraw?

[OTHELLO retires]

Now will I question Cassio of Bianca  
A huswife that by selling her desires  
Buys herself bread and clothes It is a creature  
That dotes on Cassio 'tis the strumpet's plague  
To beguile many and be beguiled by one  
He when he hears of her cannot refrain  
From the excess of laughter Here he comes

*Enter CASSIO*

As he shall smile Othello shall go mad  
And his unbookish jealousy must construe  
100 Poor Cassio's smiles gestures and light behavior  
Quite in the wrong How do you now Lieutenant?

CAS The worse that you give me the addition  
Whose want even kills me

IAGO Ply Desdemona well and you are sure on't  
[In a low voice] Now if this suit lay in Bianca's  
power

How quickly should you speed!

CAS Alas poor catiff!

OTH Look how he laughs already!

IAGO I never knew a woman love man so

CAS Alas poor rogue! I think, I faith, she loves  
me 110

OTH Now he denies it faintly and laughs it out

IAGO Do you hear, Cassio?

OTH Now he importunes him

To tell it o'er Go to well said well said!

IAGO She gives it out that you shall marry her  
Do you intend it?

CAS Ha ha ha!

OTH Do you triumph Roman? Do you triumph?

CAS I marry her! What a customer! Prithce bear  
some charity to my wit do not think it so unwhole  
some Ha ha ha!

OTH So so so! Laugh that wins! 120

IAGO Faith, the cry goes you shall marry her

CAS Prithce say true

IAGO I am a very villain else

OTH Have you scored me? Well

CAS This is the monkey's own giving out She  
is persuaded I will marry her out of her own love  
and flattery not out of my promise

OTH Iago beckons me Now he begins the story

CAS She was here even now she haunts me in  
every place I was tother day talking on the sea  
bank with certain Venetians, and thither comes this  
bauble, by this hand, she falls me thus about my  
neck— 130

61 horned man a cuckold 63 civil civilized 67 improper not private  
property 68 peculiar private 70 secure free from suspicion 74  
list limit 78 ecstasy trance 80 encave hide 81 fleers sneers 85 cope  
meet 87 in spleen swayed by impulses

93 huswife hussy 100 unbookish ignorant conster interpret 105  
addition title 107 catiff wretch 118 customer prostitute 119 wit  
intelligence 121 cry rumor 124 scored left your mark on 131  
bauble plaything

OTH Crying O dear Cassio! as it were his gesture imports it

CAS So hangs and lolls and weeps upon me, so haies and pulls me! Ha ha, ha!

OTH Now he tells how she plucked him to my chamber O I see that nose of yours but not that dog I shall throw it to

140 CAS Well I must leave her company

*Enter BIANCA*

IAGO Before me! Look where she comes

CAS 'Tis such another fitchew! marry, a perfumed one! What do you mean by this haunting of me?

BIAN Let the devil and his dam haunt you! What did you mean by that same handkerchief you gave me even now? I was a fine fool to take it I must take out the work! A likely piece of work that you should find it in your chamber and know not who left it there! This is some mix's token and I must take out the work! There! Give it your hobby horse Wheresoever you had it I'll take out no work on't

150

CAS How now my sweet Bianca! how now! how now!

OTH By heaven that should be my handkerchief!

BIAN An you'll come to supper tonight you may an you will not come when you are next prepared for *Exit*

IAGO After her! after her!

CAS Faith I must shell rail i th street else

IAGO Will you sup there?

CAS Faith I intend so

160 IAGO Well I may chance to see you for I would very fain speak with you

CAS Prithie come will you?

IAGO Go to say no more *Exit CASSIO*

OTH [comes forward] How shall I murder him Iago?

IAGO Did you perceive how he laughed at his vice?

OTH O Iago!

IAGO And did you see the handkerchief?

OTH Was that mine?

170 IAGO Yours by this hand, and to see how he prizes the foolish woman your wife! She gave it him, and he hath given it his whore

OTH I would have him nine years a killing! A fine woman! a fair woman! a sweet woman!

IAGO Nay you must forget that

OTH Ay, let her rot and perish, and be damned tonight, for she shall not live No my heart is turned to stone I strike it and it hurts my hand O the world hath not a sweeter creature! She might lie by an emperor's side and command him tasks

133 imports indicates 135 haies hauls 142 such another fitchew such a polecat 150 hobby horse harlot 154 An if

IAGO Nay that's not your way

180

OTH Hang her! I do but say what she is So delicate with her needle! an admirable musician! O she will sing the savageness out of a bear! of so high and plenteous wit and invention!

IAGO She's the worse for all this

OTH O a thousand thousand times! And then of so gentle a condition!

IAGO Ay, too gentle

OTH Nay that's certain But yet the pity of it Iago! O Iago, the pity of it Iago!

IAGO If you are so fond over her iniquity give her patent to offend for if it touch not you it comes near nobody

190

OTH I will chop her into messes Cuckold me!

IAGO O 'tis foul in her

OTH With mine officer!

IAGO That's fouler

OTH Get me some poison Iago this night I'll not expostulate with her lest her body and beauty unprovide my mind again This night Iago

IAGO Do it not with poison Strangle her in her bed even the bed she hath contaminated

200

OTH Good good! The justice of it pleases Very good!

IAGO And for Cassio let me be his undertaker You shall hear more by midnight

OTH Excellent good! *A trumpet*

What trumpet is that same?

IAGO Something from Venice

*Enter LODOVICO DESDEMONA, and ATTENDANTS*

Sure 'tis Lodovico

Come from the Duke and see your wife is with him

LOD God save you worthy General!

OTH With all my heart sir

LOD The Duke and Senators of Venice greet you [Gives him a letter]

OTH I kiss the instrument of their pleasures

210

DES And what's the news, good cousin Lodovico?

IAGO I am very glad to see you signior

Welcome to Cyprus

LOD I thank you How does Lieutenant Cassio?

IAGO Lives sir

DES Cousin, there's fall'n between him and my lord

An unkind breach but you shall make all well

OTH Are you sure of that?

DES My lord?

OTH [reads] This fail you not to do as you will—

LOD He did not call he's busy in the paper Is there division twixt my lord and Cassio?

220

184 invention originality 187 condition disposition 191 patent license 193 messes portions 203 be his undertaker take care of him

DES A most unhappy one I would do much  
 T atone them, for the love I bear to Cassio  
 OTH Fire and brimstone!  
 DES My lord?  
 OTH Are you wise?  
 DES What is he angry?  
 LOD May be the letter moved him  
 For, as I think they do command him home  
 Deputing Cassio in his government  
 DES By my troth, I am glad on t  
 OTH Indeed!  
 DES My lord?  
 OTH I am glad to see you mad  
 DES Why sweet Othello!  
 230 OTH Devil! [Strikes her]  
 DES I have not deserved this  
 LOD My lord, this would not be believed in  
 Venice  
 Though I should swear I saw t Tis very much  
 Make her amends, she weeps  
 OTH O devil devil!  
 If that the earth could teem with woman's tears,  
 Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile  
 Out of my sight!  
 DES I will not stay to offend you [Starts to go]  
 LOD Truly an obedient lady  
 I do beseech your lordship call her back  
 OTH Mistress!  
 DES My lord?  
 240 OTH What would you with her, sir?  
 LOD Who I, my lord?  
 OTH Ay, you did wish that I would make her  
 turn  
 Sir she can turn, and turn, and yet go on  
 And turn again and she can weep, sir, weep,  
 And she's obedient as you say obedient,  
 Very obedient Proceed you in your tears  
 Concerning this, sir—O well painted passion!—  
 I am commanded home Get you away,  
 I'll send for you anon Sir I obey the mandate  
 250 And will return to Venice Hence avaunt!  
 [Exit DESDEMONA]  
 Cassio shall have my place And sir tonight  
 I do entreat that we may sup together  
 You are welcome sir to Cyprus Goats and monkeys!  
 Exit  
 LOD Is this the noble Moor whom our full Sen  
 ate  
 Call all in all sufficient? Is this the nature  
 Whom passion could not shake? whose solid virtue  
 The shot of accident nor dart of chance  
 Could neither graze nor pierce?  
 IAGO He is much changed  
 LOD Are his wits safe? Is he not light of brain?

IAGO He's that he is I may not breathe my 260  
 censure  
 What he might be, if what he might he is not  
 I would to heaven he were!  
 LOD What! Strike his wife?  
 IAGO Faith, that was not so well yet would I  
 knew  
 That stroke would prove the worst!  
 LOD Is it his use?  
 Or did the letters work upon his blood  
 And new create this fault?  
 IAGO Alas! alas!  
 It is not honesty in me to speak  
 What I have seen and known You shall observe  
 him  
 And his own courses will denote him so  
 That I may save my speech Do but go after 270  
 And mark how he continues  
 LOD I am sorry that I am deceived in him  
 Exeunt

## SCENE II

*Enter OTHELLO and EMILIA*

OTH You have seen nothing then?  
 EMIL Nor ever heard, nor ever did suspect  
 OTH Yes, you have seen Cassio and she together  
 EMIL But then I saw no harm and then I heard  
 Each syllable that breath made up between them  
 OTH What! Did they never whisper?  
 EMIL Never my lord  
 OTH Nor send you out o' th' way?  
 EMIL Never  
 OTH To fetch her fan her gloves her mask nor  
 nothing?  
 EMIL Never my lord 10  
 OTH That's strange  
 EMIL I durst my lord, to wager she is honest,  
 Lay down my soul at stake If you think other  
 Remove your thought it doth abuse your bosom  
 If any wretch have put this in your head,  
 Let heaven requite it with the serpent's curse!  
 For if she be not honest chaste and true  
 There's no man happy the purest of their wives  
 Is foul as slander  
 OTH Bid her come hither go Exit EMILIA 20  
 She says enough yet she's a simple bawd  
 That cannot say as much This is a subtle whore  
 A closet lock and key of villainous secrets  
 And yet she'll kneel and pray I have seen her do t  
 Enter DESDEMONA and EMILIA  
 DES My lord what is your will?  
 OTH Pray chuck come hither

223 atone reconcile 235 teem breed 236 falls lets fall 247 passion  
 grief

264 use habit

DES What is your pleasure?  
 OTH Let me see your eyes  
 Look in my face  
 DES What horrible fancy's this?  
 OTH [to EMILIA] Some of your function, mis-  
 tiess  
 Leave procreants alone and shut the door  
 Cough or cry hem if anybody come  
 30 Your mystery, your mystery nay dispatch  
*Exit EMILIA*  
 DES Upon my knees what doth your speech im-  
 port?  
 I understand a fury in your words,  
 But not the words  
 OTH Why what art thou?  
 DES Your wife my lord your true and loyal  
 wife  
 OTH Come, swear it damn thyself  
 Lest, being like one of heaven the devils themselves  
 Should fear to seize thee Therefore be double  
 damned  
 Swear thou art honest  
 DES Heaven doth truly know it  
 40 OTH Heaven truly knows that thou art false as  
 hell  
 DES To whom my lord? With whom? How am I  
 false?  
 OTH Ah Desdemona! Away away, away!  
 DES Alas the heavy day! Why do you weep?  
 Am I the motive of these tears my lord?  
 If haply you my father do suspect  
 An instrument of this your calling back,  
 Lay not your blame on me, if you have lost him,  
 Why, I have lost him too  
 OTH Had it pleased heaven  
 To try me with affliction had they rained  
 50 All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,  
 Steeped me in poverty to the very lips  
 Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes  
 I should have found in some place of my soul  
 A drop of patience But alas, to make me  
 A fixed figure for the time of scorn  
 To point his slow unmoving finger at!  
 Yet could I bear that too, well very well  
 But there where I have garnered up my heart,  
 Where either I must live or bear no life  
 60 The fountain from the which my current runs  
 Or else dries up—to be discarded thence,  
 Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads  
 To knot and gender in! Turn thy complexion there,  
 Patience, thou young and rose lipped cherubim!  
 Ay, there look grim as hell!  
 DES I hope my noble lord esteems me honest  
 OTH O, ay, as summer flies are in the shambles

That quicken even with blowing O thou weed,  
 Who art so lovely fair and smell'st so sweet,  
 That the sense aches at thee would thou hadst ne'er 70  
 been born!  
 DES Alas what ignorant sin have I committed?  
 OTH Was this fair paper this most goodly book  
 Made to write whose upon? What committed!  
 Committed! O thou public commoner,  
 I should make very forges of my cheeks  
 That would to cinders burn up modesty  
 Did I but speak thy deeds What committed!  
 Heaven stops the nose at it and the moon winks  
 The bawdy wind that kisses all it meets  
 Is hushed within the hollow mine of earth 80  
 And will not hear it What committed!  
 Impudent strumpet!  
 DES By heaven you do me wrong!  
 OTH Are not you a strumpet?  
 DES No as I am a Christian!  
 If to preserve this vessel for my lord  
 From any other foul unlawful touch  
 Be not to be a strumpet I am none  
 OTH What, not a whore?  
 DES No, as I shall be saved!  
 OTH Is't possible?  
 DES O heaven forgive us!  
 OTH I cry you mercy then  
 I took you for that cunning whore of Venice 90  
 That married with Othello You mistress  
 That have the office opposite to Saint Peter  
 And keeps the gate of hell!  
*Enter EMILIA*  
 You you, ay, you!  
 We have done our course there's money for your  
 pains  
 I pray you turn the key and keep our counsel  
*Exit*  
 EMIL Alas what does this gentleman conceive?  
 How do you madam? How do you my good lady?  
 DES Faith half asleep  
 EMIL Good madam what's the matter with my  
 lord?  
 DES With who? 100  
 EMIL Why with my lord, madam  
 DES Who is thy lord?  
 EMIL He that is yours, sweet lady  
 DES I have none Do not talk to me, Emilia  
 I cannot weep, nor answer have I none  
 But what should go by water Prithce tonight  
 Lay on my bed my wedding sheets, remember  
 And call thy husband hither  
 EMIL Here's a change indeed! *Exit*  
 DES 'Tis meet I should be used so, very meet

30 mystery trade 44 motive cause 46 An instrument of responsible  
 for 55 time of scorn scornful world 62 cistern cesspool 63 gender  
 breed Turn change

68 quicken come to life 74 commoner prostitute 78 winks shuts her  
 eyes 84 vessel body 89 cry you mercy beg your pardon 95 counsel  
 secret



How have I been behaved that he might stick  
 110 The small st opinion on my least misuse?

*Enter IAGO and EMILIA*

IAGO What is your pleasure, madam? How is it  
 with you?

DES I cannot tell Those that do teach young  
 babes

Do it with gentle means and easy tasks  
 He might have chid me so for in good faith,  
 I am a child to chiding

IAGO What is the matter, lady?

EMIL Alas, Iago my lord hath so bewhored her,  
 Thrown such despite and heavy terms upon her  
 As true hearts cannot bear

DES Am I that name Iago?

IAGO What name fair lady?

120 DES Such as she said my lord did say I was

EMIL He called her whole a beggar in his  
 drink

Could not have laid such terms upon his callet

IAGO Why did he so?

DES I do not know I am sure I am none such

IAGO Do not weep do not weep Alas the day!

EMIL Hath she forsook so many noble matches  
 Her father and her country all her friends

To be called whore? Would it not make one weep?

DES It is my wretched fortune

IAGO Beshrew him for it!  
 How comes this trick upon him?

130 DES Nay heaven doth know

EMIL I will be hanged if some eternal villain  
 Some busy and insinuating rogue

Some cogging cozening slave to get some office,  
 Have not devised this slander I'll be hanged else

IAGO Fie, there is no such man it is impossible

DES If any such there be heaven pardon him!

EMIL A halter pardon him! and hell gnaw his  
 bones!

Why should he call her whore? Who keeps her com-  
 pany?

What place? what time? what form? what likelihood?

140 The Moor's abused by some most villanous knave

Some base notorious knave some scurvy fellow

O heaven, that such companions thou dost unfold

And put in every honest hand a whip

To lash the rascals naked through the world

Even from the east to the west!

IAGO Speak within door

EMIL O fie upon them! Some such squire he  
 was

That turned your wit the seamy side without

And made you to suspect me with the Moor

IAGO You are a fool go to

DES O good Iago,

What shall I do to win my lord again?

Good friend go to him for by this light of heaven,

I know not how I lost him Here I kneel

If e'er my will did trespass against his love

Either in discourse of thought or actual deed,

O that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense

Delighted them in any other form

Or that I do not yet and ever did

And ever will though he do shake me off

To beggarly divorcement, love him dearly,

Comfort forswear me! Unkindness may do much

And his unkindness may defeat my life

But never taint my love I cannot say where

It does abhor me now I speak the word

To do the act that might the addition earn

Not the world's mass of vanity could make me

IAGO I pray you be content tis but his humor

The business of the state does him offence

And he does chide with you

DES If twere no other—

IAGO Tis but so I warrant

[*Trumpets within*]

Hark how these instruments summon you to supper

The messengers of Venice stay the meat

Go in, and weep not all things shall be well

*Exeunt DESDEMONA and EMILIA*

*Enter RODERIGO*

How now, Roderigo!

ROD I do not find that thou dealst justly with  
 me

IAGO What in the contrary?

ROD Every day thou daffst me with some de-  
 vice, Iago, and rather as it seems to me now,  
 keepst from me all convenience than suppliest me  
 with the least advantage of hope I will indeed no  
 longer endure it nor am I yet persuaded to put up  
 in peace what already I have foolishly suffered

IAGO Will you hear me, Roderigo?

ROD Faith, I have heard too much for your  
 words and performance are no kin together

IAGO You charge me most unjustly

ROD With naught but truth I have wasted my  
 self out of my means The jewels you have had from  
 me to deliver to Desdemona would half have cor-  
 rupted a votarist You have told me she hath received  
 them and returned me expectations and comforts of  
 sudden respect and acquaintance but I find none

IAGO Well go to very well

ROD Very well! go to! I cannot go to man nor

110 opinion suspicion least misuse slightest error 117 despite  
 contempt 122 callet harlot 130 trick strange behavior 132 busy  
 prying 133 cogging cheating cozening swindling 141 notorious very  
 wicked scurvy vile 142 companions rogues unfold reveal 145  
 within door calmly

154 discourse process 160 Comfort happiness forswear abandon 161  
 defeat ruin 166 humor mood 171 stay the meat are waiting to eat  
 176 thou daffst me you put me off 178 convenience good opportu-  
 nity 180 suffered submitted to 187 votarist nun 189 sudden respect  
 immediate attention

tis not very well By this hand I say tis very scurvy  
and begun to find myself fopped in it

IAGO Very well

ROD I tell you tis not very well I will make my  
self known to Desdemona If she will return me my  
jewels I will give over my suit and repent my un-  
lawful solicitation If not assure yourself I'll seek  
satisfaction of you

200 IAGO You have said now

ROD Ay and said nothing but what I protest  
intendment of doing

IAGO Why, now I see there's mettle in thee and  
even from this instant do build on thee a better opin-  
ion than ever before Give me thy hand Roderigo  
Thou hast taken against me a most just exception  
but yet I protest I have dealt most directly in thy  
affair

ROD It hath not appeared

210 IAGO I grant indeed it hath not appeared and  
your suspicion is not without wit and judgment But  
Roderigo if thou hast that in thee indeed which I  
have greater reason to believe now than ever I  
mean purpose courage and valor this night show  
it If thou the next night following enjoy not Desde-  
mona take me from this world with treachery and  
devise engines for my life

ROD Well what is it? Is it within reason and  
compass?

IAGO Sir, there is especial commission come from  
Venice to depute Cassio in Othello's place

220 ROD Is that true? Why then Othello and Desde-  
mona return again to Venice

IAGO O no he goes into Mauritania and takes  
away with him the fair Desdemona unless his abode  
be lingered here by some accident wherein none  
can be so determinate as the removing of Cassio

ROD How do you mean removing him?

IAGO Why by making him incapable of  
Othello's place knocking out his brains

ROD And that you would have me to do

230 IAGO Ay if you dare do yourself a profit and a  
right He sups tonight with a harlotry and thither  
will I go to him He knows not yet of his honorable  
fortune If you will watch his going thence which I  
will fashion to fall out between twelve and one you  
may take him at your pleasure I will be near to  
second your attempt and he shall fall between us  
Come stand not amazed at it but go along with  
me I will show you such a necessity in his death  
that you shall think yourself bound to put it on  
him It is now high supper time and the night  
grows to waste About it!

240 ROD I will hear further reason for this

IAGO And you shall be satisfied *Exeunt*

194 fopped fooled 206 exception criticism 207 directly straight  
forwardly 215 engines for plots against 22? abode stay lingered  
lengthened accident happening 223 determinate decisive 226 un-  
capable unable to fill 232 fashion arrange

### SCENE III

*Enter* OTHELLO LODOVICO DESDEMONA EMILIA,  
and ATTENDANTS

LOD I do beseech you sir, trouble yourself no  
further

OTH O pardon me twill do me good to walk

LOD Madam goodnight I humbly thank you  
ladyship

DES Your honor is most welcome

OTH Will you walk, sir?

O Desdemona—

DES My lord?

OTH Get you to bed on th instant I will be re-  
turned forthwith Dismiss your attendant there  
Look t be done

DES I will my lord

*Exeunt* [OTHELLO LODOVICO, and ATTENDANTS]

EMIL How goes it now? He looks gentler than  
he did

DES He says he will return incontinent  
He hath commanded me to go to bed  
And bid me to dismiss you

EMIL Dismiss me!

DES It was his bidding therefore good Emilia  
Give me my nightly wearing and adieu  
We must not now displease him

EMIL I would you had never seen him!

DES So would not I My love doth so approve  
him

That even his stubbornness his checks his frowns—  
Prithee unpin me—have grace and favor in them

20 EMIL I have laid those sheets you bade me on  
the bed

DES All's one Good faith how foolish are our  
minds!

If I do die before thee prithee shroud me  
In one of those same sheets

EMIL Come come you talk

DES My mother had a maid called Barbary  
She was in love and he she loved proved mad  
And did forsake her She had a song of Willow  
An old thing twas but it expressed her fortune  
And she died singing it That song tonight  
Will not go from my mind I have much to do  
But to go hang my head all at one side  
And sing it like poor Barbary Prithee dispatch

EMIL Shall I go fetch your nightgown?

DES No, unpin me here

This Lodovico is a proper man

EMIL A very handsome man

DES He speaks well

EMIL I know a lady in Venice would have  
walked barefoot to Palestine for a touch of his nether  
lip

11 incontinent immediately 19 stubbornness roughness checks re-  
bukes 26 mad heckle 30 much to do all I can do 33 nightgown  
dressing gown 34 proper goodlooking

DES [Sings]

The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,  
Sing all a green willow  
Her hand on her bosom her head on her knee,  
Sing willow willow willow  
The fresh streams ran by her and murmured her moans  
Sing willow, willow willow  
Her salt tears fell from her and softened the stones  
Sing willow—

Lay by these

willow willow

Prithce hie thee he'll come anon

Sing all a green willow must be my garland  
Let nobody blame him his scorn I approve—

Nay that's not next Haik! who is't that knocks?

EMIL Its the wind

DES

I called my love false love but what said he then?  
Sing willow willow willow  
If I court moe women you'll couch with moe men—

So get thee gone, goodnight Mine eyes do itch  
Doth that bode weeping?

EMIL 'Tis neither here nor there  
DES I have heard it said so O, these men, these men!

Dost thou in conscience think tell me Emilia  
That there be women do abuse their husbands  
In such gross kind?

EMIL There be some such no question  
DES Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?

EMIL Why would not you?

DES No by this heavenly light!

EMIL Nor I neither by this heavenly light I might do't as well i'th dark

DES Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?

EMIL The world's a huge thing It is a great price for a small vice

DES Good troth, I think thou wouldst not

EMIL By my troth I think I should and undo't when I had done Marry I would not do such a thing for a jointing, nor for measures of lawn nor for gowns, petticoats nor caps, nor any petty exhibition But for all the whole world! 'ud's pity who would not make her husband a cuckold to make him a monarch? I should venture purgatory for't

DES Beshrew me if I would do such a wrong For the whole world

EMIL Why the wrong is but a wrong i'th world and having the world for your labor 'tis a wrong in your own world and you might quickly make it right

49 hie hurry 56 moe more 74 exhibition present

DES I do not think there is any such woman

EMIL Yes a dozen and as many to th' vantage as would store the world they played for

But I do think it is their husbands faults

If wives do fall Say that they slack their duties

And pour our treasures into foreign laps

Or else break out in peevish jealousies

Throwing restraint upon us, or say they strike us

O! scant our former having in despite

Why we have galls, and though we have some grace

Yet have we some revenge Let husbands know

Their wives have sense like them they see and smell

And have their palates both for sweet and sour

As husbands have What is it that they do

When they change us for others? Is it sport?

I think it is And doth affection breed it?

I think it doth Is't frailty that thus errs?

It is so too And have not we affections

Desires for sport, and frailty as men have?

Then let them use us well else let them know

The ills we do then ills instruct us so

DES Goodnight goodnight God me such usage send

Not to pick bad from bad, but by bad mend!

*Exeunt*

## ACT V

### SCENE I

*Enter IAGO and RODERIGO*

IAGO Here, stand behind this bulk straight will he come

Wear thy good rapier bare and put it home

Quick quick Fear nothing I'll be at thy elbow

It makes us or it maims us, think on that

And fix most firm thy resolution

ROD Be near at hand I may miscarry in't

IAGO Here at thy hand Be bold and take thy stand

[*Stands aside*]

ROD I have no great devotion to the deed,

And yet he hath given me satisfying reasons

'Tis but a man gone Forth my sword he dies

IAGO I have rubbed this young quat almost to the sense,

And he grows angry Now whether he kill Cassio

Or Cassio him or each do kill the other,

Every way makes my gain Live Roderigo,

He calls me to a restitution large

Of gold and jewels that I bobbed from him

83 to th' vantage in addition 84 store populate 88 peevish fool h  
90 having allowance 91 galls resentment grace goodness 97 af  
fection impulse 103 usage way of acting 1 bulk shop front 2 put  
it home thurst it all the way 6 miscarry go wrong 11 quat pimple  
ense quick 12 angry inflamed 16 bobbed swindled

As gifts to Desdemona  
It must not be If Cassio do remain,  
He hath a daily beauty in his life  
20 That makes me ugly and besides the Moor  
May unfold me to him there stand I in much peril  
No he must die Be t so I hear him coming

*Enter CASSIO*

ROD I know his gait tis he Villain thou diest!  
[*Strikes at CASSIO*]  
CAS That thrust had been mine enemy indeed  
But that my coat is better than thou know st  
I will make proof of thine [*Wounds RODERIGO*]  
ROD O I am slam!  
[*IAGO wounds CASSIO in the leg and exit*]  
CAS I am maimed for ever! Help ho! Murther!  
murther! [*Falls*]

*Enter OTHELLO*

OTH The voice of Cassio Iago keeps his word  
ROD O villain that I am!  
OTH Hark tis even so  
30 CAS O help ho! Light! A surgeon!  
OTH Tis he O brave Iago, honest and just  
That hast such noble sense of thy friends wrong!  
Thou teachest me Minion you dear lies dead  
And your unblest fate hies Strumpet I come  
Forth of my heart those charms thine eyes are  
blotted,  
Thy bed lust-stained, shall with lusts blood be  
spotted *Exit*

*Enter LODOVICO and GRATIANO*

CAS What ho? No witch? No passage? Murther!  
murther!  
GRA Tis some mischance The cry is very due  
ful  
CAS O help!  
40 LOD Hark!  
ROD O wretched villain!  
LOD Two or three groan It is a heavy night  
These may be counterfeits Lets think t unsafe  
To come in to the cry without more help  
ROD Nobody come? Then shail I bleed to death  
LOD Hark!

*Enter IAGO with a light*

GRA Heies one comes in his shirt with light  
and weapons  
IAGO Whos there? Whose noise is this that cries  
on murther?  
LOD We do not know  
IAGO Did not you hear a cry?  
CAS Here here! For heavens sake, help me!  
50 IAGO Whats the matter?

25 coat steel proof jacket 26 proof trial 33 Minion precious darling  
34 hies hastens 37 passage passers by 42 heavy darl

GRA This is Othello s ancient as I take it  
LOD The same indeed a very valiant fellow  
IAGO What are you here that cry so grievously?  
CAS Iago? O I am spoiled, undone by villains!  
Give me some help  
IAGO O me Lieutenant! What villains have done  
this?  
CAS I think that one of them is hereabout  
And cannot make away  
IAGO O treacheious villains!  
Whrt are you there? Come in and give some help  
[*To LODOVICO and GRATIANO*]  
ROD O help me here!  
CAS Thats one of them  
IAGO O murderous slave! O villain!  
[*Stabs RODERIGO*]  
ROD O damned Iago! O inhuman dog!  
IAGO Kill men i th dark! Where be these bloody  
thieves?

How silent is this town! Ho! murther! murther!  
What may you be? Are you of good or evil?  
LOD As you shall prove us praise us  
IAGO Signior Lodovico?  
LOD He sir  
IAGO I cry you mercy Heres Cassio hurt by  
villains  
GRA Cassio!  
IAGO How is t brother?  
CAS My leg is cut in two  
IAGO Marry heaven forbid!  
Light gentlemen I ll bind it with my shirt

*Enter BIANCA*

BIAN What is the matter ho? Who is t that  
cried?  
IAGO Who is t that cried!  
BIAN O my dear Cassio!  
My sweet Cassio! O Cassio Cassio Cassio!  
IAGO O notable stumpet! Cassio may you sus  
pect  
Who they should be that have thus mangled you?  
CAS No  
GRA I am sorry to find you thus I have been  
to seek you  
IAGO Lend me a garter So O for a chan  
To bear him easily hence!  
BIAN Alas, he faints! O Cassio Cassio Cassio!  
IAGO Gentlemen all, I do suspect this trash  
To be a party in this injury  
Patience awhile good Cassio Come come  
Lend me a light Know we this face or no?  
Alas my friend and my dear countryman  
Roderigo! No! Yes, sure O heaven, Roderigo!  
GRA What of Venice?  
IAGO Even he, sir Did you know him?  
GRA Know him! Ay  
IAGO Signior Gratiano! I cry your gentle pardon

60

70

80

90

These bloody accidents must excuse my manners  
That so neglected you

GRA I am glad to see you

IAGO How do you Cassio? O a chair a chair!

GRA Roderigo!

IAGO He he tis he [*a chair brought in*] O that's  
well said the chair

Some good man bear him carefully from hence

I'll fetch the General's surgeon For you mistress,

100 Save you your labor He that lies slain here Cassio  
Was my dear friend What malice was between you?

CAS None in the world nor do I know the man

IAGO [*to BIANCA*] What look you pale?—O bear  
him out o' th' air

[*CASSIO and RODERIGO are borne off*]

Stay you good gentlemen Look you pale mistress?

Do you perceive the gastness of her eye?

Nay, if you stare we shall hear more anon

Behold her well I pray you look upon her

Do you see gentlemen? Nay, guiltiness will speak

Though tongues were out of use

*Enter EMILIA*

110 EMIL Las what's the matter? What's the mat-  
ter husband?

IAGO Cassio hath here been set on in the dark  
By Roderigo and fellows that are scaped  
He's almost slain and Roderigo dead

EMIL Alas good gentleman! alas good Cassio!

IAGO This is the fruit of whoring Prithee Emilia  
Go know of Cassio where he supped tonight  
[*to BIANCA*] What, do you shake at that?

BIAN He supped at my house but I therefore  
shake not

IAGO O did he so? I charge you go with me

120 EMIL Fie fie upon thee, strumpet!

BIAN I am no strumpet but of life as honest  
As you that thus abuse me

EMIL As I? Foh! fie upon thee!

IAGO Kind gentlemen let's go see poor Cassio  
dressed

[*to BIANCA*] Come mistress you must tell's another  
tale

Emilia run you to the citadel

And tell my lord and lady what hath happened

[*Exit EMILIA*]

Will you go on afore? [*Exeunt all but IAGO*] This  
is the night

That either makes me or fordoes me quite [*Exit*]

## SCENE II

DESDEMONA in her bed *Enter OTHELLO with a light*

OTH It is the cause it is the cause my soul  
Let me not name it to you you chaste stars!

98 well said well done 105 gastness terror 128 fordoes ruins

It is the cause Yet I'll not shed her blood,  
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow  
And smooth as monumental alabaster

Yet she must die else she'll betray more men

Put out the light, and then put out the light

If I quench thee thou flaming minister

I can again thy former light restore

Should I repent me but once put out thy light

Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature

I know not where is that Promethean heat

That can thy light relume When I have plucked thy  
rose

I cannot give it vital growth again

It needs must wither I'll smell it on the tree

*He kisses her*

O balmy breath that dost almost persuade

Justice to break her sword! One more, one more!

Be thus when thou art dead and I will kill thee

And love thee after One more and that's the last

So sweet was ne'er so fatal I must weep

But they are cruel tears This sorrow's heavenly

It strikes where it doth love She wakes

DES Who's there? Othello?

OTH Ay Desdemona

DES Will you come to bed my lord?

OTH Have you prayed tonight Desdemona?

DES Ay my lord

OTH If you bethink yourself of any crime

Unreconciled as yet to heaven and grace,

Solicit for it straight

DES Alack my lord what may you mean by  
that?

OTH Well do it and be brief, I will walk by

I would not kill thy unprepared spirit

No heaven forbid! I would not kill thy soul

DES Talk you of killing?

OTH Ay, I do

DES Then heaven

Have mercy on me!

OTH Amen with all my heart!

DES If you say so I hope you will not kill me

OTH Hum!

DES And yet I fear you for you're fatal then

When your eyes roll so Why I should fear I know  
not

Since guiltiness I know not but yet I feel I fear

OTH Think on thy sins

DES They are loves I bear to you

OTH Ay, and for that thou diest

DES That death's unnatural that kills for loving  
Alas why gnaw you so your nether lip?

Some bloody passion shakes your very frame

These are portents but yet I hope I hope

They do not point on me

OTH Peace and be still!

5 alabaster alabaster 8 minister servant 13 relume light again 34  
forfend forbid 47 portents ominous signs

DES I will so What's the matter?  
 50 OTH That handkerchief which I so loved and  
 gave thee  
 Thou gav'st to Cassio  
 DES No by my life and soul!  
 Send for the man and ask him  
 OTH Sweet soul take heed,  
 Take heed of perjury thou art on thy deathbed  
 DES Ay but not yet to die  
 OTH Yes presently  
 Therefore confess thee freely of thy sin  
 For to deny each article with oath  
 Cannot remove nor choke the strong conception  
 That I do groan withal Thou art to die  
 DES Then Lord have mercy on me!  
 OTH I say amen  
 60 DES And have you mercy too! I never did  
 Offend you in my life never loved Cassio  
 But with such general warranty of heaven  
 As I might love I never gave him token  
 OTH By heaven I saw my handkerchief in's  
 hand!  
 O perjured woman! thou dost stone my heart  
 And makest me call what I intend to do  
 A murder which I thought a sacrifice  
 I saw the handkerchief  
 DES He found it then  
 I never gave it him Send for him hither  
 Let him confess a truth  
 70 OTH He hath confessed  
 DES What my lord?  
 OTH That he hath used thee  
 DES How unlawfully?  
 OTH Ay  
 DES He will not say so  
 OTH No his mouth is stopped  
 Honest Iago hath taken order for't  
 DES O, my fear interprets What is he dead?  
 OTH Had all his hairs been lives, my great  
 revenge  
 Had stomach for them all  
 DES Alas he is betrayed and I undone!  
 OTH Out strumpet! Weepst thou for him to  
 my face?  
 80 DES O banish me my lord, but kill me not!  
 OTH Down strumpet!  
 DES Kill me tomorrow let me live tonight!  
 OTH Nay an you strive—  
 DES But half an hour!  
 OTH Being done there is no pause  
 DES But while I say one prayer!  
 OTH It is too late *Smother's her*  
 EMIL [*at the door*] My lord, my lord! What ho!  
 my lord my lord!

OTH What noise is this? Not dead? Not yet quite  
 dead?  
 I that am cruel am yet merciful  
 I would not have thee linger in thy pain  
 90 So, so  
 EMIL [*within*] What ho! my lord my lord!  
 OTH Who's there?  
 EMIL [*within*] O good my lord I'd speak a word  
 with you!  
 OTH Yes 'Tis Emilia By and-by She's dead  
 'Tis like she comes to speak of Cassio's death  
 The noise was high Ha, no more moving?  
 Still as the grave Shall she come in? Were't good?  
 I think she stirs again No What's best to do?  
 If she come in she'll sure speak to my wife  
 My wife! my wife! What wife? I have no wife  
 100 O insupportable! O heavy hour!  
 Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse  
 Of sun and moon and that th' affrighted globe  
 Should yawn at alteration  
 EMIL [*within*] I do beseech you  
 That I may speak with you O good my lord!  
 OTH I had forgot thee O come in Emilia  
 Soft by and by Let me the curtains draw  
 Where art thou? [*Opens the door*]

*Enter EMILIA*

What's the matter with thee now?  
 EMIL O my good lord yonder's foul murders  
 done!  
 OTH What now?  
 110 EMIL But now my lord  
 OTH It is the very error of the moon  
 She comes more nearer earth than she was wont  
 And makes men mad  
 EMIL Cassio, my lord, hath killed a young  
 Venetian  
 Called Roderigo  
 OTH Roderigo killed!  
 And Cassio killed!  
 EMIL No Cassio is not killed  
 OTH Not Cassio killed? Then murder's out of  
 tune  
 And sweet revenge grows harsh  
 DES O falsely, falsely murdered!  
 EMIL O Lord! what cry is that?  
 120 OTH That? What?  
 EMIL Out and alas! that was my lady's voice  
 Help! help! ho! help! O lady speak again!  
 Sweet Desdemona! O sweet mistress speak!  
 DES A guiltless death I die  
 EMIL O who hath done this deed?  
 DES Nobody I myself Farewell  
 Commend me to my kind lord, O farewell!

*She dies*

54 presently at once 57 conception conviction 61 Offend wrong  
 65 stone turn to stone 77 stomach appetite

96 high loud 104 yawn open in an earthquake 112 error wandering  
 off the course 128 Commend me give my love

OTH Why, how should she be murdered?  
 EMIL Alas who knows?  
 130 OTH You heard her say herself it was not I  
 EMIL She said so, I must needs report the truth  
 OTH She's like a liar gone to burning hell  
 'Twas I that killed her  
 EMIL O the more angel she  
 And you the blacker devil!  
 OTH She turned to folly and she was a whore  
 EMIL Thou dost belie her and thou art a devil  
 OTH She was false as water  
 EMIL Thou art rash as fire to say  
 That she was false O, she was heavenly true!  
 OTH Cassio did top her, ask thy husband else  
 140 O I were damned beneath all depth in hell  
 But that I did proceed upon just grounds  
 To this extremity Thy husband knew it all  
 EMIL My husband?  
 OTH Thy husband  
 EMIL That she was false to wedlock?  
 OTH Ay, with Cassio Nay had she been true,  
 If heaven would make me such another world  
 Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,  
 I'd not have sold her for it  
 EMIL My husband?  
 150 OTH Ay, 'twas he that told me first  
 An honest man he is and hates the slime  
 That sticks on filthy deeds  
 EMIL My husband?  
 OTH What needs this iteration, woman? I say  
 thy husband  
 EMIL O mistress, villany hath made mocks with  
 love!  
 My husband say she was false?  
 OTH He, woman  
 I say, thy husband Dost understand the word?  
 My friend thy husband, honest, honest Iago  
 EMIL If he say so, may his pernicious soul  
 Rot half a gram a day! He lies to thy heart  
 160 She was too fond of her most filthy bargain  
 OTH Ha!  
 EMIL Do thy worst  
 This deed of thine is no more worthy heaven  
 Than thou wast worthy her  
 OTH Peace, you were best  
 EMIL Thou hast not half the power to do me  
 harm  
 As I have to be hurt O gull! O dolt!  
 As ignorant as dirt! Thou hast done a deed—  
 I care not for thy sword I'll make thee known  
 Though I lost twenty lives Help! help! ho! help!  
 170 The Moor hath killed my mistress! Murder! mur-  
 ther!

135 folly wantonness 142 extremity extreme violence 153 iteration  
 repetition 166 gull dupe

*Enter MONTANO, GRATIANO, IAGO, and others*

MON What is the matter? How now General?  
 EMIL O are you come Iago? You have done  
 well  
 That men must lay their murthers on your neck  
 GRA What is the matter?  
 EMIL Disprove this villain if thou beest a man  
 He says thou toldst him that his wife was false  
 I know thou didst not thou art not such a villain  
 Speak for my heart is full  
 IAGO I told him what I thought and told no  
 more  
 Than what he found himself was apt and true  
 180 EMIL But did you ever tell him she was false?  
 IAGO I did  
 EMIL You told a lie an odious damned lie  
 Upon my soul a lie! a wicked lie!  
 She false with Cassio? Did you say with Cassio?  
 IAGO With Cassio mistress Go to charm your  
 tongue  
 EMIL I will not charm my tongue, I am bound  
 to speak  
 My mistress here lies murdered in her bed—  
 ALL O heavens forbend!  
 EMIL And your reports have set the murder on  
 190 OTH Nay stare not, masters It is true indeed  
 GRA 'Tis a strange truth  
 MON O monstrous act!  
 EMIL Villany, villany villany!  
 I think upon't I think! I smell't! O villany!  
 I thought so then I'll kill myself for grief  
 O villany villany!  
 IAGO What, are you mad? I charge you get you  
 home  
 EMIL Good gentlemen, let me have leave to  
 speak  
 'Tis proper I obey him but not now  
 Perchance Iago I will ne'er go home  
 200 OTH O! O! O! *Falls on the bed*  
 EMIL Nay, lay thee down and roar,  
 For thou hast killed the sweetest innocent  
 That e'er did lift up eye  
 OTH O she was foul! [*Rises*]  
 I scarce did know you uncle There lies your niece  
 Whose breath indeed these hands have newly  
 stopped  
 I know this act shows horrible and grim  
 GRA Poor Desdemona! I am glad thy father's  
 dead  
 Thy match was mortal to him and pure grief  
 Shore his old thread atwain Did he live now  
 This sight would make him do a desperate turn,  
 210 Yea, curse his better angel from his side

180 apt probable 186 charm silence 206 shows appears 209 Shore  
 cut atwain in two



And fall to reprobance

OTH Tis pitiful but yet Iago knows  
That she with Cassio hath the act of shame  
A thousand times committed Cassio confessed it  
And she did gratify his amorous works  
With that recognizance and pledge of love  
Which I first gave her I saw it in his hand  
It was a handkerchief an antique token

220 My father gave my mother

EMIL O God! O heavenly God!

IAGO Zounds hold your peace!

EMIL Twill out, twill out! I peace?  
No I will speak as liberal as the north  
Let heaven and men and devils, let them all,  
All all cry shame against me, yet I'll speak

IAGO Be wise and get you home

EMIL I will not

[IAGO draws and threatens EMILIA]

GRA Fie!

Your sword upon a woman?

EMIL O thou dull Moor! That handkerchief thou  
speakst of

230 I found by fortune and did give my husband,  
For often with a solemn earnestness  
More than indeed belonged to such a trifle  
He begged of me to steal

IAGO Villanous whore!

EMIL She gave it Cassio! No alas I found it,  
And I did give it my husband

IAGO Filth thou heath!

EMIL By heaven I do not I do not gentlemen  
O murderous coxcomb! what should such a fool  
Do with so good a wife?

OTH Are there no stones in heaven  
But what serves for the thunder? Precious villain!

*The Moor runs at IAGO IAGO kills his wife*

240 GRA The woman falls Sure he hath killed his  
wife

EMIL Ay ay O lay me by my mistress side  
*Exit IAGO*

GRA He's gone but his wife's killed

MON Tis a notorious villain Take you this  
weapon

Which I have here recovered from the Moor  
Come guard the door without, let him not pass,  
But kill him rather I'll after that same villain  
For tis a damned slave

*Exeunt MONTANO and GRATIANO*

OTH I am not valiant neither,  
But every puny whipster gets my sword  
But why should honor outlive honesty?  
Let it go all

212 reprobance damnation 216 gratify reward 217 recognizance  
bond 223 liberal as the north freely as the north wind 237 coxcomb  
fool 238 stones bolts 239 Precious unequaled 244 recovered got pos-  
session of 248 puny whipster little whippersnapper 249 honesty  
uprightness

EMIL What did thy song bode lady? 250

Haik canst thou hear me? I will play the swan  
And die in music [*Sings*] Willow, willow willow  
Moor she was chaste She loved thee cruel Moor  
So come my soul to bliss as I speak true  
So speaking as I think I die I die *She dies*

OTH I have another weapon in this chamber  
It is a sword of Spain the ice brook's temper  
O here it is Uncle I must come forth

GRA [*within*] If thou attempt it it will cost thee  
dear

Thou hast no weapon and perforce must suffer 260

OTH Look in upon me then and speak with me  
Or naked as I am I will assault thee

[*Enter GRATIANO*]

GRA What is the matter?

OTH Behold, I have a weapon  
A better never did itself sustain

Upon a soldier's thigh I have seen the day  
That with this little arm and this good sword  
I have made my way through more impediments  
Than twenty times your stop But O vain boast!  
Who can control his fate? Tis not so now

Be not afraid, though you do see me weaponed 270  
Here is my journey's end, here is my butt  
And very sear mark of my utmost sail

Do you go back dismayed? Tis a lost fear  
Man but a rush against Othello's breast

And he retires Where should Othello go?

Now how dost thou look now? O ill-starred wench!  
Pale as thy smock! When we shall meet at compt

This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven

And fiends will snatch at it Cold, cold, my girl?

Even like thy chastity O cursed cursed slave! 280  
Whip me ye devils

From the possession of this heavenly sight!

Blow me about in winds roast me in sulphur,

Wash me in steep down gulfs of liquid fire!

O Desdemona! dead! Desdemona! dead! O! O!

*Enter LODOVICO, MONTANO, IAGO and OFFICERS*  
*CASSIO in a chair*

LOD Where is this rash and most unfortunate  
man?

OTH That's he that was Othello Here I am

LOD Where is that viper? Bring the villain forth

OTH I look down towards his feet, but that's a  
fable

If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee

[*Wounds IAGO*]

LOD Wrench his sword from him

IAGO I bleed, sir but not killed

257 the ice brook's temper tempered in icy water 262 naked un-  
armed 268 stop hindrance 271 butt limit 272 sear mark beacon 274

Man but a rush fight with only a bulrush 275 retires retreats 277

at compt on judgment day

OTH I am not sorry neither I'd have thee live  
For in my sense tis happiness to die

LOD O thou Othello that wert once so good,  
Fall'n in the practice of a damned slave  
What shall be said to thee?

OTH Why, anything  
An honorable murderer, if you will,  
For naught I did in hate but all in honor

LOD This wretch hath part confessed his villany  
300 Did you and he consent in Cassio's death?

OTH Ay

CAS Dear General I never gave you cause

OTH I do believe it and I ask your pardon  
Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil  
Why he hath thus ensnared my soul and body?

IAGO Demand me nothing What you know you  
know

From this time forth I never will speak word

LOD What not to pray?

GRA Torments will open your lips

OTH Well thou dost best

LOD Sir, you shall understand what hath befallen,  
310 Which as I think you know not Here is a letter  
Found in the pocket of the slain Roderigo  
And here another the one of them imports  
The death of Cassio to be undertook

By Roderigo

OTH O villain!

CAS Most heathenish and most gross!

LOD Now here's another discontented paper  
Found in his pocket too and this it seems,  
Roderigo meant to have sent this damned villain  
320 But that belike Iago in the nick  
Came in and satisfied him

OTH O thou pernicious carrion!  
How came you Cassio, by that handkerchief  
That was my wife's?

CAS I found it in my chamber  
And he himself confessed it but even now  
That there he dropped it for a special purpose  
Which wrought to his desire

OTH O fool! fool! fool!

CAS There is besides in Roderigo's letter  
How he upbraids Iago that he made him  
Brave me upon the watch whereon it came  
330 That I was cast and even but now he spake  
After long seeming dead Iago hurt him  
Iago set him on

LOD You must forsake this room and go with us  
Your power and your command is taken off  
And Cassio rules in Cyprus For this slave  
If there be any cunning cruelty  
That can torment him much and hold him long

It shall be his You shall close prisoner rest  
Till that the nature of your fault be known  
To the Venetian state Come, bring away

OTH Soft you a word or two before you go  
I have done the state some service and they know't

No more of that I pray you in your letters  
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate  
Speak of me as I am Nothing extenuate,  
Nor set down aught in malice Then must you speak  
Of one that loved not wisely but too well

Of one not easily jealous but being wrought  
Perplexed in the extreme, of one whose hand

Like the base Indian threw a pearl away  
350 Richer than all his tribe of one whose subdued eyes,  
Albert unused to the melting mood

Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees  
Their medicinal gum Set you down this

And say besides that in Aleppo once  
Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk

Beat a Venetian and traduced the state

I took by the throat the circumcised dog

And smote him thus *He stabs himself*

LOD O bloody period!

GRA All that's spoke is married

OTH I kissed thee ere I killed thee No way but  
this

Killing myself, to die upon a kiss

CAS This did I fear but thought he had no  
weapon

For he was great of heart

LOD O Spartan dog

More fell than anguish hunger or the sea!

Look on the tragic loading of this bed

This is thy work The object poisons sight

Let it be hid Gratiano, keep the house

And seize upon the fortunes of the Moor

For they succeed on you To you, Lord Governor

Remains the censure of this hellish villain

The time the place, the torture—O enforce it!

Myself will straight aboard and to the state

This heavy act with heavy heart relate *Exeunt*

338 close prisoner rest remain in strict confinement 341 Soft just  
a moment 349 Perplexed entangled 351 subdued overcome by emo-  
tion 354 medicinal used in medicine 357 traduced slandered 360  
period ending 365 fell cruel 371 censure judgment 374 act series of  
events

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1 How does Shakespeare convey to us the situation of  
the play? How do his methods in this respect differ  
from those of Sophocles?

2 Do the shifts in time and place of *Othello* affect its  
unity?

3 What is the basic action of the play? How is it re-  
vealed?

4 If the chorus of *Oedipus Rex* may be said to present  
the commentator on the events of the play does the  
omission of the chorus in *Othello* make it more difficult  
to follow?

293 happiness good fortune 295 practice plot 300 consent in con-  
spire 313 imports tells of 316 gross flagrant 320 belike presumably  
in the nick just in time 326 wrought worked 330 cast dismissed

5 What is the style of poetry of the play? How does it contribute to the action? How does it differ from *Oedipus Rex*?

6 What is the nature of Iago's character? What are his motivations? Are the reasons he gives in his soliloquies the real reasons for his actions? Are they strong enough to justify his conduct? What is his view of life how does it contrast with Othello's? Is there a character similar to Iago in *Oedipus Rex*?

7 What is the nature of Othello's character? What are his motivations? What weakness of character does he exhibit? Does he fall because of the success of Iago's designs or because of the weakness of character which Iago's machinations bring to the surface?

8 Is Othello's downfall justified? What effect does his fall have on us?

9 What view of life does Shakespeare take in the play? How is this revealed? What is your reaction to this view?

10 What points of similarity and of difference do you find in *Othello* and *Oedipus Rex*?



## The "Othello" Music

G Wilson Knight

For a time G Wilson Knight's books on Shakespeare were dismissed as nonsense by scholars more concerned with the establishment of the text of the plays than with an understanding of what the text said. However in recent years it is becoming more and more apparent that Knight is one of the most significant interpreters of Shakespeare: his work has become widely influential and he appears to be taking on some of the stature of a modern day Bradley, the author whose work on Shakespearean tragedy stands as probably the most influential criticism of Shakespeare ever written. T. S. Eliot has confessed that reading his essays seems to me to have enlarged my understanding of the Shakespearean pattern. This is the clue to Knight's approach to view the plays as a whole and by meticulous analysis, to abstract from them the peculiarly Shakespearean view of life. Of course such a method is particularly open to abuse for the critic may be imposing on the play not Shakespeare's but his own view of life. But with the help of the myth and ritual approach to literature Knight has drawn from the plays a view of life which if it is not altogether Shakespeare's—for after all his view of life is in the plays themselves—does at least justice to their variety, breadth and depth. The paper on *Othello* is characteristic of Knight's method: careful scrutiny of the text hand in hand with an awareness of the larger meanings of the play.

IN *Othello* we are faced with the vividly particular rather than the vague and universal. The play as a whole has a distinct formal beauty within it we are ever confronted with beautiful and solid forms. The persons tend to appear as warmly human, concrete. They are neither vaguely universalized as in *King Lear* or *Macbeth* nor deliberately mechanized and vitalized by the poet's philosophic plan as in *Measure for Measure* and *Timon of Athens* wherein the significance of the dramatic person is dependent almost wholly on our understanding of the allegorical or symbolical meaning. It is true that Iago is here a mysterious inhuman creature of unlimited cynicism but the very presence of the concrete creations around in differentiating him sharply from the rest limits and defines him. *Othello* is a story of intrigue rather than a visionary statement. If however we tend to regard Othello, Desdemona and Iago as suggestive symbols rather than human beings, we may from a level view of their interaction, find a clear relation existing between *Othello* and other plays of the hate theme. Such an analysis will be here only in part satisfactory. It exposes certain underlying ideas abstracts them from the original it is less able to interpret the whole positive beauty of the play. With this important reservation I shall push the interpretative method as far as possible.

*Othello* is dominated by its protagonist. Its supremely beautiful effects of style are all expressions of Othello's personal passion. Thus in first analysing Othello's poetry we shall lay the basis for an understanding of the play's symbolism: this matter of style is indeed crucial and I shall now indicate those qualities which clearly distinguish it from other Shakespearean poetry. It holds a rich music all its own, and possesses a unique solidity and precision of picturesque phrase or image, a peculiar chastity and serenity of thought. It is as a rule barren of direct metaphysical content. Its thought does not mesh with the reader's rather it is always outside us aloof. This aloofness is the resultant of an inward aloofness of image from image, word from word. The dominant quality is separation, not as is more usual in Shakespeare cohesion. Consider these\* exquisite poetic movements.

O heavy hour!

Methinks it should be now a huge eclipse  
Of sun and moon and that the affrighted globe  
Should yawn at alteration (v ii 97)

Or

It is the very error of the moon

[The number of the Act and Scene given for any play in this essay identify accurately the passage referred to although the line number may differ (by a few lines) in various publications — Editors]

She comes more near the earth than she was wont  
And makes men mad (v ii 107)

These are solid gems of poetry which lose little by divorce from their context wherein they differ from the finest passages of *King Lear* or *Macbeth* which are as wild flowers not to be uprooted from their rooted soil if they are to live. In these two quotations we should note how the human drama is thrown into sudden contrast and vivid unexpected relation with the tremendous concrete machinery of the universe which is thought of in terms of individual heavenly bodies sun and moon. The same effect is apparent in

Nay had she been true  
If Heaven would make me such another world  
Of one entire and perfect chrysolite  
I'd not have sold her for it (v ii 141)

Notice the single word chrysolite with its outstanding and remote beauty this is typical of *Othello*

The effect in such passages is primarily one of contrast. The vastness of the night sky and its moving planets, or the earth itself—here conceived objectively as a solid round visualized object—these things though thrown momentarily into sensible relation with the passions of man, yet remain vast distant separate, seen but not apprehended, something against which the dramatic movement may be silhouetted but with which it cannot be merged. This poetic use of heavenly bodies serves to elevate the theme to raise issues infinite and unknowable. Those bodies are not, however, implicit symbols of man's spirit as in *King Lear* they remain distinct isolated phenomena sublimely decorative to the play. In *Macbeth* and *King Lear* man commands the elements and the stars they are part of him. Compare the above quotations from *Othello* with this from *King Lear*

You nimble lightnings dart your blinding flames  
Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty  
You fen suck'd fogs drawn by the powerful sun  
To fall and blast her pride (ii iv 167)

This is typical natural images are given a human value. They are insignificant visually their value is only that which they bring to the human passion which cues out to them. Their aesthetic grandeur in and for themselves is not relevant to the *King Lear* universe. So, too, *Macbeth* cries

Stars hide your fires  
Let not light see my black and deep desires (i iv 50)

And Lady *Macbeth*

Come thick night  
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of Hell

That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
Nor Heaven peep through the blanket of the dark  
To cry Hold hold! (i v 51)

Here and in the *King Lear* extract there is no clear visual effect as in *Othello* tremendous images and suggestions are evoked only to be blurred as images by the more powerful passion which calls them into being. Images in *Macbeth* are thus continually vague mastered by passion apprehended but not seen. In *Othello's* poetry they are concrete detached seen but not apprehended. We meet the same effect in

Like to the Pontic sea  
Whose icy current and compulsive course  
Ne'er feels retiring ebb but keeps due on  
To the Propontic and the Hellespont  
Even so my bloody thoughts with violent pace  
Shall ne'er look back ne'er ebb to humble love  
Till that a capable and wide revenge  
Swallow them up Now by yond marble heaven  
In the due reverence of a sacred vow  
I here engage my words (iii iii 454)

This is, indeed a typical speech. The long comparison explicitly made where in *King Lear* or *Macbeth* a series of swiftly evolving metaphors would be more characteristic is another example of the separateness obtaining throughout *Othello*. There is no fusing of word with word rather a careful juxtaposition of one word or image with another. And there are again the grand single words Propontic, Hellespont, with their sharp clear consonant sounds, constituting defined aural solids typical of the *Othello* music indeed fine single words especially proper names are a characteristic of this play—Anthropophagi Ottomites Arabian trees, the base Indian the Egyptian Palestine Mauritania the Sagittary Olympus Mandragora, Othello Desdemona. This is a rough assortment not all used by *Othello*, but it points the *Othello* quality of rich often expressly consonantal, outstanding words. Now *Othello's* prayer, with its marble heaven is most typical and illustrative. One watches the figure of *Othello* silhouetted against a flat solid moveless sky there is a plastic, static suggestion about the image. Compare it with a similar *King Lear* prayer

O heavens  
If you do love old men if your sweet sway  
Allow obedience if yourselves are old  
Make it your cause send down and take my part! (ii iv 192)

Here we do not watch Lear. We are Lear. There is no visual effect, no rigid subject object relation between Lear and the heavens nor any contrast, but an absolute unspatial unity of spirit. The heavens blend with Lear's prayer each is part of the other. There is an intimate interdependence, not a mere

juxtaposition Lear thus identifies himself in kind with the heavens to which he addresses himself directly Othello speaks of yond marble heaven in the third person and swears by it does not pray to it It is conceived as outside his interests

This detached style most excellent in point of clarity and stateliness tends also to lose something in respect of power At moments of great tension the *Othello* style fails of a supreme effect Capable of fine things quite unmatched in their particular quality in any other play it nevertheless sinks sometimes to a studied artificiality nerveless and without force For example Othello thinks of himself as

one whose subdued eyes  
Albert unused to the melting mood  
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees  
Their medicinal gum (v ii 347)

Beside this we might place Macduff's

O I could play the woman with mine eyes  
And braggart with my tongue! But gentle heavens  
Cut short all intermission (iv iii 229)

Othello's lines here have a certain restrained melodic beauty, like the Pontic sea passage, both speeches use the typical *Othello* picturesque image or word both compare by simile the passion of man with some picture delightful in itself which is developed for its own sake slightly overdeveloped—so that the final result makes us forget the emotion in contemplation of the image Beauty has been imposed on human sorrow rather than shown to be intrinsic therein But Macduff's passionate utterance has not time to paint word pictures of yond marble heaven or to search for abstruse geographical images of the Hellespont or Arabia There is more force in his first line than all Othello's slightly overstrained phraseology of subdued eyes and melting mood Its strength derives from the compression of metaphor and the sudden heightened significance of a single very commonplace word (woman) whereas the other style deliberately refuses power in the level proximity of simile and searches always for the picturesque The *Othello* style is diffuse, leisurely, like a meandering river, the *Macbeth* style compressed, concentrated and explosive often jerky leaping like a mountain torrent But metaphor is not essential to intensest Shakespearian power Another still finer passage from *King Lear* on the same theme might be adduced

*Cordelia* How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?

*Lear* You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave  
Thou art a soul in bliss but I am bound  
Upon a wheel of fire that mine own tears  
Do scald like molten lead (iv vii 44)

The extraordinary force of that ending is gained by simile but there is no diffusion of content no accent that does not carry the maximum of emotion It is even more powerful than Macduff's speech since it lacks excitability it has the control and dignity of Othello's with the compressed, explosive quality of Macduff's The *Othello* style does not compass the overpowering effects of *Macbeth* or *King Lear* nor does it, as a rule aim at them At the most agonizing moments of Othello's story however, there is apparent weakness we find an exaggerated false rhetoric

There is a speech in *Othello* that begins in the typical restrained manner but degenerates finally to what might almost be called bombast It starts

Where should Othello go?  
Now how dost thou look now? O ill star'd wench!  
Pale as thy smock! When we shall meet at compt  
This look of thine will hurl my soul from Heaven  
And fiends will snatch at it Cold cold my girl!  
Even like thy chastity (v ii 270)

Here we have the perfection of the *Othello* style Concrete visual detached Compare it with Lear's Thou art a soul in bliss, where the effect, though perhaps more powerful and immediate is yet vague intangible spiritualized Now this speech, started in a style that can in its own way challenge that of *King Lear*, rapidly degenerates as Othello's mind is represented as collapsing under the extreme of anguish

O cursed cursed slave! Whip me ye devils  
From the possession of this heavenly sight!  
Blow me about in winds! roast me in sulphur!  
Wash me in steep down gulfs of liquid fire!  
O Desdemona! Desdemona! dead!  
Oh! Oh! Oh! (v ii 276)

There is a sudden reversal of poetic beauty these lines lack cogency because they exaggerate rather than concentrate the emotion Place beside these violent eschatological images the passage from *King Lear*

And my poor fool is hang'd! No no no life!  
Why should a dog a horse a rat have life  
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more  
Never never never never never!  
Pray you undo this button thank you sir  
Do you see this? Look on her look her lips  
Look there look there! (v iii 307)

Notice by what rough homely images the passion is transmitted—which are as truly an integral part of the naturalism of *King Lear* as the mosaic and polished phrase, and the abstruse and picturesque allusion are in its best passages, characteristic of Othello's speech Thus the extreme, slightly exag

gerated beauty of Othello's language is not maintained. This is even more true elsewhere. Othello who usually luxuriates in deliberate and magnificent rhetoric raves falls in a trance

Lie with her! lie on her! We say lie on her when they belie her. Lie with her! that's fulsome. Handkerchief—confessions—handkerchief! To confess and be hanged for his labour: first to be hanged and then to confess—I tremble at it. Nature would not invest herself in such shadowing passion without some instruction. It is not words that shake me thus. Pish! Noses, ears, and lips—Is't possible?—Confess—handkerchief!—O devil!

(iv 1 35)

Whereas Lear's madness never lacks artistic meaning, whereas its most extravagant and grotesque effects are presented with imaginative cogency Othello can speak words like these. This is the Iago spirit: the Iago-medicine at work like an acid eating into bright metal. This is the primary fact of Othello and therefore of the play: something of solid beauty is undermined, wedged open so that it exposes an extreme ugliness.

When Othello is represented as enduring loss of control he is, as Macbeth and Lear never are, ugly, idiotic; but when he has full control he attains an architectural stateliness of quarried speech, a silver rhetoric of a kind unique in Shakespeare.

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul—  
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!—  
It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood,  
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,  
And smooth as monumental alabaster.  
Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.  
Put out the light, and then put out the light.  
If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,  
I can again thy former light restore.  
Should I repent me, but once put out thy light,  
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,  
I know not where is that Promethean heat  
That can thy light relume. When I have plucked the rose,  
I cannot give it vital growth again,  
It needs must wither. I'll smell it on the tree.

(v 11 1)

This is the noble *Othello* music: highly coloured, rich in sound and phrase, stately. Each word solidifies as it takes its place in the pattern. This speech well illustrates the *Othello* style: the visual or tactile suggestion—whiter skin of hers than snow, smooth as monumental alabaster, the slightly over-decorative phrase flaming minister, the momentary juxtaposition of humanity and the vast spaces of the night, the chaste stars, the concrete imagery of thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature, and the lengthy comparison of life with light, the presence of simple forward-flowing clarity of dignified state-

ment and of simile in place of the superlogical welding of thought with molten thought as in the more compressed, agile and concentrated poetry of *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, and the fine, outstanding single word, Promethean. In these respects Othello's speech is nearer the style of the aftermath of Elizabethan literature, the settled lava of that fiery eruption which gave us the solid image of Marvell and the marmoreal phrase of Browne: it is the most Miltonic thing in Shakespeare.

This peculiarity of style directs our interpretation in two ways. First, the tremendous reversal from extreme, almost over-decorative, beauty to extreme ugliness—both of a kind unusual in Shakespeare—will be seen to reflect a primary truth about the play. That I will demonstrate later in my essay. Second, the concreteness and separation of image, word or phrase, contrasting with the close-knit language elsewhere, suggests a proper approach to *Othello* which is not proper to *Macbeth* or *King Lear*. Separation is the rule throughout *Othello*. Whereas in *Macbeth* and *King Lear* we have one dominant atmosphere built of a myriad subtleties of thought and phraseology entwining throughout, subduing our minds wholly to their respective visions, whereas each has a single quality, expresses as a whole a single statement, *Othello* is built rather of outstanding differences. In *Othello* all is silhouetted, defined, concrete. Instead of reading a unique pervading atmospheric suggestion—generally our key to interpretation of what happens within that atmosphere—we must here read the meaning of separate persons. The persons here are truly separate: Lear, Cordelia, Edmund all grow out of the *Lear* universe, all are levelled by its characteristic atmosphere, all blend with it and with each other so that they are less closely and vividly defined. They lack solidity. Othello, Desdemona, Iago, however, are clearly and vividly separate. All here—but Iago—are solid, concrete. Contrast is raised to its highest pitch. Othello is statuesque, Desdemona most concretely human and individual, Iago, if not human or in any usual sense realistic, is quite unique. Within analysis of these three persons and their interaction lies the meaning of *Othello*. In *Macbeth* or *King Lear* we interpret primarily a singleness of vision. Here confronted with a significant diversity, we must have regard to the essential relation existing between the three main personal conceptions. Interpretation must be based not on unity but on differentiation. Therefore I shall pursue an examination of this triple symbolism which analysis will finally resolve the difficulty of Othello's speech, wavering as it does between what at first sight appears an almost artificial beauty and an equally artistic ugliness.

Othello radiates a world of romantic, heroic and picturesque adventure. All about him is highly col-

oued He is a Moor he is noble and generally respected he is proud in the riches of his achievement Now his prowess as a soldier is emphasized His aims have spent their dearest action in the tented field (I iii 85) Agam

The tyrant custom most grave Senators,  
Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war  
My thrice driven bed of down (I iii 230)

His iron warriorship is suggested throughout Iago says

Can he be angry? I have seen the cannon  
When it hath blown his ranks into the air  
And like the Devil from his very arm  
Puff'd his own brother—and can he be angry?  
Something of moment then I will go meet him  
There's matter in't indeed if he be angry  
(III iv 133)

And Lodovico

Is this the noble nature  
Whom passion could not shake? Whose solid virtue  
The shot of accident nor dart of chance  
Could neither graze nor pierce? (IV i 276)

But we also meet a curious discrepancy Othello tells us

Rude am I in my speech  
And little bless'd with the soft phrase of peace  
(I iii 81)

Yet the dominant quality in this play is the exquisitely moulded language the noble cadence and chiselled phrase of Othello's poetry Othello's speech therefore reflects not a soldier's language but the quality of soldiership in all its glamour of romantic adventure it holds an imaginative realism It has a certain exotic beauty, is a storied and romantic treasure house of rich colourful experiences He recounts his adventures, telling of

antres vast and deserts idle  
Rough quarries rocks and hills whose heads touch  
heaven (I iii 140)

of Cannibals and the Anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders (I iii 144) He tells Desdemona of the handkerchief given by an Egyptian to his mother

'Tis true there's magic in the web of it  
A sibyl that had number'd in the world  
The sun to course two hundred compasses  
In her prophetic fury sew'd the work  
The worms were hallow'd that did breed the silk  
And it was dyed in mummy which the skilful  
Conserved of maiden's hearts (III iv 70)

Swords are vivid spiritualized things to Othello There is his famous line

Keep up your bright swords for the dew will rust  
them (I ii 59)

And in the last scene he says

I have another weapon in this chamber  
It is a sword of Spain the ice brooks temper  
(V ii 251)

In his address at the end, he speaks of himself as

one whose hand  
Like the base Indian threw a pearl away  
Richer than all his tribe (V ii 345)

His tears flow as the gum from Arabian trees (V ii 349) he recounts how in Aleppo he smote a malignant and a turban'd Turk (V ii 352) for insulting Venice Finally there is his noble apostrophe to his lost occupation

Farewell the plumed troop and the big wars  
That make ambition virtue! O farewell!  
Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump  
The spirit-stirring drum the ear-piercing fife  
The royal banner and all quality  
Pride pomp and circumstance of glorious war!  
And O you mortal engines whose rude throats  
The immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit  
Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone  
(III iii 350)

Agam we have the addition of phrase to separate phrase rather than the interdependence the evolution of thought from thought the clinging mesh of close bound suggestions of other plays This noble eulogy of war is intrinsic to the conception War is in Othello's blood When Desdemona accepts him she knows she must not be a moth of peace (I iii 258) Othello is a compound of highly coloured romantic adventure—he is himself coloured—and war together with a great pride and a great faith in those realities His very life is dependent on a fundamental belief in the validity and nobility of human action—with, perhaps, a strong tendency towards his own achievement in particular Now war in Shakespeare is usually a positive spiritual value like love There is reference to the soldiership of the protagonist in all the plays analysed in my present treatment Soldiership is almost the condition of nobility and so the Shakespearean hero is usually a soldier Therefore Othello with reference to the Shakespearean universe becomes automatically a symbol of faith in human values of love, of war of romance in a wide and sweeping sense He is, as it were, conscious of all he stands for from the first to the last he loves his own romantic history He is like Troilus dedicated to these values has faith and pride in both Like Troilus he is conceived as extraordinarily direct, simple credulous (IV i 46) Othello, as he appears in the action of



the play, may be considered the high priest of human endeavour robed in the vestments of romance whom we watch serving in the temple of war at the altar of love's divinity

Desdemona is his divinity. She is at the same time warmly human. There is a certain domestic femininity about her. She is a maiden never bold (I iii 94). We hear that the house affairs (had Cordelia any?) drew her often from Othello's narrative (I iii 147). But she asks to hear the whole history

I did consent,  
And often did beguile her of her tears  
When I did speak of some distressful stroke  
That my youth suffered. My story being done,  
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs.  
She swore in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing  
strange  
'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful.  
She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd  
That heaven had made her such a man.

(I iii 155)

The same domesticity and gentleness is apparent throughout. She talks of to-night at supper (III iii 57) or to-morrow dinner (III iii 58), she is typically feminine in her attempt to help Cassio, and her pity for him. This is how she describes her suit to Othello

Why this is not a boon  
'Tis as I should entreat you wear your gloves  
Or feed on nourishing dishes or keep you warm  
Or sue to you to do a peculiar profit  
To your own person

(III iii 76)

—a speech reflecting a world of sex contrast. She would bind Othello's head with her handkerchief—that handkerchief which is to become a terrific symbol of Othello's jealousy. The *Othello* world is eminently domestic, and Desdemona expressly feminine. We hear of her needlework (IV i 197), her fan, gloves, mask (IV ii 8). In the exquisite willow song scene, we see her with her maid, Emilia. Emilia gives her 'her nightly wearing' (IV iii 16). Emilia says she has laid on her bed the wedding sheets (IV ii 104). Desdemona asked for 'Then there is the willow song, brokenly sung whilst Emilia unpins' (IV iii 34). Desdemona's dress

My mother had a maid called Barbara  
She was in love, and he she loved proved mad  
And did forsake her

(IV iii 26)

The extreme beauty and pathos of this scene are largely dependent on the domesticity of it. *Othello* is eminently a domestic tragedy. But this element in the play is yet to be related to another more universal element. *Othello* is concretely human, so is

Desdemona. *Othello* is very much the typical middle-aged bachelor entering matrimony late in life but he is also, to transpose a phrase of Iago's, a symbol of human—especially masculine—purpose, courage and valour (IV ii 218) and in a final judgement is seen to represent the idea of human faith and value in a very wide sense. Now Desdemona also very human with an individual domestic feminine charm and simplicity is yet also a symbol of woman in general daring the unknown seas of marriage with the mystery of man. Beyond this, in the far flight of a transcendental interpretation it is clear that she becomes a symbol of man's ideal, the supreme value of love. At the limit of the series of wider and wider suggestions which appear from imaginative contemplation of a poetic symbol she is to be equated with the divine principle. In one scene of *Othello* and one only direct poetic symbolism breaks across the vividly human domestic world of this play.<sup>1</sup> As everything in *Othello* is separated, defined, so the plot itself is in two distinct geographical divisions: Venice and Cyprus. Desdemona leaves the safety and calm of her home for the stormy voyage to Cyprus and the tempest of the following tragedy. Iago's plot begins to work in the second part. The storm scene between the two parts is important.

Storms are continually symbols of tragedy in Shakespeare. This scene contains some most vivid imaginative effects among them passages of fine storm-poetry of the usual kind

For do but stand upon the foaming shore  
The chidden billow seems to pelt the clouds  
The wind shak'd surge with high and monstrous  
mane  
Seems to cast water on the burning bear  
And quench the guards of the ever fixed pole  
I never did like molestation view  
On the enchafed flood

(II i 11)

This storm-poetry is here closely associated with the human element. And in this scene where direct storm symbolism occurs it is noteworthy that the figures of Desdemona and Othello are both strongly idealized.

*Cassio* Tempests themselves high seas and howling  
winds

The gutter'd rocks and congregated sands—  
Traitors ensteep'd to clog the guiltless keel—  
As having sense of beauty do omit  
Their mortal natures letting go safely by  
The divine Desdemona

*Montano*

What is she?

*Cassio* She that I spake of our great captain's captain  
Left in the conduct of the bold Iago

<sup>1</sup> But note too the significance of the magic handkerchief as both a symbol of domestic sanctity and the play's one link with the supernatural (1947).

Whose footing here anticipates our thoughts  
 A sen night's speed Great Jove Othello guard  
 And swell his sail with thine own powerful breath  
 That he may bless this bay with his tall ship  
 Make love's quick pants in Desdemona's arms  
 Give renewed fire to our extincted spirits  
 And bring all Cyprus comfort!

*Enter Desdemona &c*

O behold

The riches of the ship is come on shore!  
 Ye men of Cyprus let her have your knees  
 Hail to thee lady! and the grace of Heaven  
 Before behind thee and on every hand  
 Enwheel thee round! (II 1 68)

Desdemona is thus endued with a certain transcendent quality of beauty and grace. She paragon's description and wild fame says Cassio: she is

One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens  
 And in the essential vesture of creation  
 Does tire the ingener (II 1 63)

And Othello enters the port of Cyprus as a hero coming to bring comfort, to give renewed fire to men. The entry of Desdemona and that of Othello are both heralded by discharge of guns which both merges finely with the tempest symbolism and the violent stress and excitement of the scene as a whole and heightens our sense of the warrior nobility of the protagonist and his wife subdued as she is to the very quality of her lord (I iii 253). Meeting Desdemona he speaks

*Othello* O my fair warrior!

*Desdemona* My dear Othello!

*Othello* It gives me wonder great as my content  
 To see you here before me O my soul's joy!  
 If after every tempest come such calms  
 May the winds blow till they have waken'd death!  
 And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas  
 Olympus high and duck again as low  
 As Hell's from Heaven! If it were now to die  
 Twere now to be most happy for, I fear  
 My soul hath her content so absolute  
 That not another comfort like to this  
 Succeeds in unknown fate (II 1 185)

This is the harmonious marriage of true and noble minds. Othello, Desdemona and their love are here apparent in this scene of storm and reverberating discharge of cannon, as things of noble and conquering strength they radiate romantic valour. Othello is essential man in all his prowess and protective strength. Desdemona essential woman, gentle loving brave in trust of her warrior husband. The war is over. The storm of sea or bruit of cannonade are powerless to hurt them yet there is another storm brewing in the venom'd mind of Iago. Instead of

merging with and accompanying tragedy the storm here is thus contrasted with the following tragic events as usual in *Othello* contrast and separation take the place of fusion and unity. This scene is thus a microcosm of the play reflecting its action. Colours which are elsewhere softly toned are here splashed vividly on the play's canvas. Here especially Othello appears a prince of heroes. Desdemona is lit by a divine feminine radiance both are transfigured. They are shown as coming safe to land by Heaven's grace, triumphant, braving war and tempestuous seas guns thundering their welcome. The reference to all this, on the plane of high poetic symbolism to the play as a whole is evident.

Against these two Iago pits his intellect. In this scene too Iago declares himself with especial clarity

O gentle lady do not put me to t  
 For I am nothing if not critical (II 1 118)

His conversation with Desdemona reveals his philosophy. Presented under the cloak of fun it exposes nevertheless his attitude to life that of the cynic. Roderigo is his natural companion the fool is a convenient implement and at the same time continual food for his philosophy. Othello and Desdemona are radiant beautiful. Iago opposes them critical intellectual. Like cold steel his cynic skill will run through the warm body of their love. Asked to praise Desdemona he draws a picture of womanly goodness in a vein of mockery, and concludes

*Iago* She was a wight if ever such wight were—

*Desdemona* To do what?

*Iago* To suckle fools and chronicle small beer (II 1 158)

Here is his reason for hating Othello's and Desdemona's love: he hates their beauty to him a meaningless, stupid thing. That is Iago. Cynicism is his philosophy, his very life, his motive in working Othello's ruin. The play turns on this theme: the cynical intellect pitted against a lovable humanity transfigured by qualities of heroism and grace. As Desdemona and Othello embrace he says

O you are well tuned now!  
 But I'll set down the pegs that make this music  
 As honest as I am (II 1 202)

Music is apt we remember Othello's rich harmony of words. Against the *Othello* music Iago concentrates all the forces of cynic villainy.

Iago's cynicism is recurrent

Virtue! a fig! 'tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus

(I iii 323)

Love to him is

merely a lust of the blood and a permission of  
the will (I iii 339)

He believes Othello's and Desdemona's happiness will be short lived since he puts no faith in the validity of love. Early in the play he tells Roderigo

It cannot be that Desdemona should long continue her  
love to the Moor nor he his to her. These  
Moors are changeable in their wills the food that  
to him now is as luscious as locusts shall be to him  
shortly as bitter as coloquintida. She must change for  
youth when she is sated with his body she will find  
the error of her choice she must have change she  
must

(I iii 347)

This is probably Iago's sincere belief, his usual attitude to love he is not necessarily deceiving Roderigo. After this, when he is alone we hear that he suspects Othello with his own wife nor are we surprised. And finally his own cynical beliefs suggest to him a way of spiting Othello. He thinks of Cassio

After some time to abuse Othello's ear  
That he is too familiar with his wife (I iii 401)

The order is important. Iago first states his disbelief in Othello's and Desdemona's continued love and next thinks of a way of precipitating its end. That is he puts his cynicism into action. The same rhythmic sequence occurs later. Iago witnesses Cassio's meeting with Desdemona at Cyprus, and comments as follows

He takes her by the palm ay well said whisper with  
as little a web as this will I ensnare as great a fly as  
Cassio. Ay smile upon her do I will gyve thee in  
thine own courtship (II i 168)

Iago believes Cassio loves Desdemona. He has another cynical conversation with Roderigo as to Desdemona's chances of finding satisfaction with Othello and the probability of her love for Cassio (II i 223-79). A kiss to Iago cannot be courtesy it is

Lechery by this hand an index and obscure prologue  
to the history of lust and foul thoughts (II i 265)

Iago is sincere enough and means what he says. Cynicism is the key to his mind and actions. After Roderigo's departure he again refers to his suspicions of Othello—and Cassio too—with his own wife. He asserts definitely—and here there is no Roderigo to impress—his belief in Cassio's guilt

That Cassio loves her I do well believe it  
That she loves him tis apt and of great credit  
(II i 298)

In this soliloquy he gets his plans clearer again they are suggested by what he believes to be truth. I do not suggest that Iago lacks conscious villainy far from it. Besides in another passage he shows that he is aware of Desdemona's innocence (IV i 48). But it is important that we observe how his attitude to life casts the form and figure of his meditated revenge. His plan arises out of the cynical depths of his nature. When at the end he says I told him what I thought (V ii 174) he is speaking at least a half-truth. He hates the romance of Othello and the loveliness of Desdemona because he is by nature the enemy of these things. Cassio he says

hath a daily beauty in his life  
That makes mine ugly (V i 19)

This is his motive throughout. Other suggestions are surface deep only. He is cynicism loathing beauty refusing to allow its existence. Hence the venom of his plot the plot is Iago—both are ultimate cause less self begotten. Iago is cynicism incarnate and projected into action.

Iago is thus utterly devilish there is no weakness in his casing armour of unrepentant villainy. He is a kind of Mephistopheles closely equivalent to Goethe's devil the two possessing the same qualities of mockery and easy cynicism. Thus he is called a hellish villain by Lodovico (V ii 367), a demi-devil by Othello (V ii 300). Othello says

I look down towards his feet but that's a fable  
If that thou beest a devil I cannot kill thee  
(V ii 285)

Iago himself recognizes a kinship

Hell and night  
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's sight  
(I iii 409)

And

Divinity of Hell!  
When devils will the blackest sins put on  
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows  
As I do now (II iii 359)

He knows that his poison (III iii 326) will burn like the mines of sulphur (III iii 330) in Othello. Thus Iago is to Othello the antithesis of Desdemona the relation is that of the spirit of denial to the divine principle. Desdemona plays the god (II iii 356) with Othello if she is false Heaven mocks itself (III iii 278). During the action as Iago's plot succeeds her essential divinity changes for Othello to a thing hideous and devilish—that is to its antithesis

Her name that was as fresh  
As Dian's visage is now begrimed and black  
As mine own face (III iii 387)

She is now devil (iv 1 252 255) or the fair devil (iii iii 479) her hand a sweating devil (iii iv 43) the devils themselves will fear to seize her for her heavenly looks (iv ii 35) Thus Iago himself a kind of devil insidiously eats his way into this world of romance chivalry nobility The word devil occurs frequently in the latter acts devils are alive here ugly little demons of black disgrace They swarm over the mental horizon of the play occurring frequently Iago is directly or indirectly their author and originator Devil, Hell damnation—these words are recurrent and continually juxtaposed to thoughts of Heaven, prayer, angels We are clearly set amid Heaven and men and devils (v ii 219) Such terms are related here primarily to sexual impurity In *Othello* pure love is the supreme good impurity damnation This pervading religious tonal significance relating to infidelity explains lines such as

Turn thy complexion there  
Patience thou young and rose lipped cherubin—  
Ay there look grim as Hell! (iv ii 61)

Othello addresses Emilia

You mistress  
That have the office opposite to Saint Peter  
And keep the gate of Hell! (iv ii 89)

Here faithful love is to be identified with the divine the heavenly unfaithful love or the mistrust which imagines it or the cynic that gives birth to that imagination—all these are to be identified with the devil The hero is set between the forces of Divinity and Hell The forces of Hell win and pure love lies slain Therefore Othello cries to devils to whip him from that heavenly sight (v ii 276) He knows himself to have been entrapped by hell forces The Iago Devil association is of importance

It will be remembered that *Othello* is a play of concrete forms This world is a world of visual images, colour and romance It will also be clear that the mesh of devil references I have just suggested show a mental horizon black formless colourless They contrast with the solid chiselled enamelled *Othello* style elsewhere This devil world is insubstantial vague negative Now on the plane of personification we see that Othello and Desdemona are concrete moulded of flesh and blood warm Iago contrasts with them metaphysically as well as morally he is unlimited formless villainy He is the spirit of denial wholly negative He never has visual reality He is further blurred by the fact of his being something quite different from what he appears to the others Is he to look like a bluff soldier or Mephistopheles? He is a different kind of being from Othello and Desdemona he belongs to a different world They, by their very existence,

assert the positive beauty of created forms—hence Othello's perfected style of speech his strong human appeal his faith in creation's values of love and war This world of created forms this sculptural and yet pulsing beauty the Iago spirit undermines poisons disintegrates Iago is a demon of cynicism colourless formless in a world of colours shapes and poetry's music Of all these he would create chaos Othello's words are apt

Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul  
But I do love thee! And when I love thee not  
Chaos is come again (iii iii 90)

Chaos indeed Iago works at the foundations of human values Cassio is a soldier he ruins him as a soldier makes him drunk So he ruins both Othello's love and warrior heart He makes him absurd ugly Toward the end of the play there is hideous suggestion We hear of cords knives poison (iii iii 389) of lovers as pious as goats as hot as monkeys (iii iii 404) we meet Bianca the whore told by Cassio to throw her vile guesses in the Devil's teeth (iii iv 183) there are Othello's incoherent mutterings Pish! Noses ears and lips! (iv i 43) he will chop Desdemona into messes (iv i 210) she reminds him of foul toads (iv ii 60) Watching Cassio he descends to this

O! I see that nose of yours but not the dog I shall  
throw it to (iv i 144)

Othello strikes Desdemona behaves like a raging beast Fire and brimstone! (iv i 246) he cries and again Goats and monkeys! (iv i 274) Heaven stops the nose at Desdemona's impurity (iv ii 76) Othello in truth behaves like a beggar in his drink (iv ii 120) In all these phrases I would emphasize not the sense and dramatic relevance alone but the suggestion—the accumulative effect of ugliness hellishness idiocy negation It is a formless colourless essence insidiously undermining a world of concrete visual richly-toned forms That is the Iago spirit embattled against the domesticity the romance, the idealized humanity of the *Othello* world

Here, too we find the reason for the extreme contrast of Othello's two styles one exotically beautiful the other blatantly absurd ugly There is often no dignity in Othello's rage There is not meant to be Iago would make discord of the *Othello* music Thus at his first conquest he filches something of Othello's style and uses it himself

Not poppy nor mandragora  
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world  
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep  
Which thou owedst yesterday (iii iii 331)

To him Othello's pride in his life-story and Desdemona's admiration were ever stupid

Mark me with what violence she first loved the Moor  
but for bragging and telling her fantastical lies and  
will she love him still for prating? (II 1 225)

Iago nothing if not critical speaks some truth of Othello's style—it is fantastical. As I have shown it is somewhat over decorative highly coloured. The dramatic value of this style now appears. In fact, a proper understanding of Othello's style reveals Iago's motive so often questioned. There is something sentimental in Othello's language. In Othello Iago is pure cynicism. That Iago should scheme—in this dramatic symbolism forged in terms of interacting persons—to undermine Othello's faith in himself, his wife and his occupation is inevitable. Logically the cynic must oppose the sentimentalist. Dramatically he works his ruin by deceit and deception. That Othello often just misses tragic dignity is the price of his slightly stunted emotionalism. Othello loves emotion for its own sake luxuriates in it, like Richard II. As ugly and idiot ravings disjointed and with no passionate dignity even succeed Othello's swell and flood of poetry. Iago's triumph seems complete. The honoured warrior rich in strength and experience noble in act and repute, lies in a trance, nerveless, paralysed by the Iago conception.

Work on my medicine work (IV 1 45)

But Iago's victory is not absolute. During the last scene Othello is a nobly tragic figure. His ravings are not final he rises beyond them. He slays Desdemona finally not so much in rage as for the cause (V 1 1). He slays her in love. Though Desdemona fails him his love, homeless perplexed in the extreme (V 1 345) endures. He will kill her and 'love her after' (V 1 19). In that last scene, too, he utters the grandest of his poetry. The Iago spirit never finally envelops him, masters him, disintegrates his soul. Those gem-like miniatures of poetic movement quoted at the start of my essay are among Othello's last words. His vast love has it is true, failed in a domestic world. But now symbols of the wide beauty of the universe enrich his thoughts: the chaste stars, the sun and moon, the 'affrighted globe', the world of one entire and perfect chrysolite that may not buy a Desdemona's love. At the end we know that Othello's fault is simplicity alone. He is indeed, a gull, a dolt (V 1 161), he loves not wisely but too well (V 1 343). His simple faith in himself endures and at the end, he takes just pride in recalling his honourable service.

In this essay I have attempted to expose the underlying thought of the play. Interpretation here is not easy, nor wholly satisfactory. As all within

*Othello*—save the Iago theme—is separated, differentiated, solidified so the play itself seems at first to be divorced from wider issues: a lone thing of meaningless beauty in the Shakespearian universe solitary, separate, unyielding and chaste as the moon. It is unapproachable, yields itself to no easy mating with our minds. Its thought does not readily mesh with our thought. We can visualize it, admire its concrete felicities of phrase and image, the mosaic of its language, the sculptural outline of its effects, the precision and chastity of its form. But one cannot be lost in it, subdued to it, enveloped by it, as one is drenched and refreshed by the elemental cataracts of *King Lear*, one cannot be intoxicated by it as by the rich wine of *Antony and Cleopatra*. *Othello* is essentially outside us, beautiful with a lustrous, planetary beauty. Yet the Iago conception is of a different kind from the rest of the play. This conception alone if no other reason existed, would point the necessity of an intellectual interpretation. So we see the Iago spirit gnawing at the root of all the *Othello* values: the *Othello* beauties, he eats into the core and heart of this romantic world, worms his way into its solidity, rotting it, poisoning it. Once this is clear the whole play begins to have meaning. On the plane of dramatic humanity we see a story of the cynic intriguing to ruin the soldier and his love. On the plane of poetic conception in matters of technique, style, personification—there we see a spirit of negation, colourless and undefined attempting to make chaos of a world of stately architectural and exquisitely coloured forms. The two styles of Othello's speech illustrate this. Thus the different technique of the *Othello* and Iago conceptions is intrinsic with the plot of the play. In them we have the spirit of negation set against the spirit of creation. That is why Iago is undefined, devisualized, inhuman in a play of consummate skill in concrete imagery and vivid human delineation. He is a colourless and ugly thing in a world of colour and harmony. His failure lies in this: in the final scene at the moment of his complete triumph, Emilia dies for her mistress to the words of Desdemona's willow song and the *Othello* music itself sounds with a nobler cadence, a richer flood of harmonies, a more selfless and universalized flight of the imagination than before. The beauties of the *Othello* world are not finally disintegrated: they make a swan-like end, fading in music.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What techniques of criticism does Knight use? In what ways do they differ from those used by Fergusson?
2. Do Knight's statements seem more dogmatic to you than those of Fergusson? Which uses evidence more persuasively?

3 Does the style of writing of a critic quite apart from his ideas affect your acceptance or rejection of his criticism?

4 Do you find Knight's analysis of *Othello* helpful? In what ways or is the reverse true and if so why?

5 Can his critical techniques be applied to other plays as well?



## Detective Story

### *Sidney Kingsley*

Playwrighting is first and foremost a craft and then an art. It is no exaggeration to say that almost every successful dramatist has had close connections with the stage and knows what can and what cannot be done on it through firsthand acquaintance with its possibilities and limitations. Shakespeare immediately jumps to mind for he came to playwrighting with a rich background of intimate experience of all phases of the theatre: acting, managing, and even ownership. Contrariwise, one of the chief reasons for the failure of the nineteenth-century poets to write successful plays was that despite their gifts as poets they wrote not for the stage but rather for the closet: poetical plays which were dramatic in form but quite unsuited to the stage. The author of such previous successes as *Men in White*, Sidney Kingsley is noted for his mastery of the craft of writing for the stage. Although he would not claim to be a great writer, he is nevertheless a careful student of the stage as a medium, and his plays show every evidence of thorough and detailed workmanship. After an absence of several years from Broadway, Kingsley returned to it in 1949 with *Detective Story*, which scored another hit for him. As we shall see from the analysis of the play which follows, the text *Detective Story* is almost a textbook example of how a play should be put together. Yet the play is not only structurally (and almost academically) sound; it has the power of arousing our interest and excitement. The dialogue attracts the ear with its richness and sharpness; the settings and situations are inherently exciting; the characters, although not complex, are yet human and real; and the problems they are confronted with evoke our sympathetic response. Yet in spite of or perhaps because of its structure, the play has been infused with overtones of meaning particularly appropriate to our times. Kingsley has used the conventions of the well-made play to explore the fascist unconscious within us without preaching a lesson or detracting in any way from the swift pace of the play. *Detective Story* was an instantaneous Broadway success, but curiously enough, a failure in London, where the critics

could not get past the local color of the New York police station.

#### CHARACTERS\*

DETECTIVE DAKIS  
A SHOPLIFTER  
DETECTIVE GALLAGHER  
MRS. FARRAGUT  
JOE FEINSON  
DETECTIVE CALLAHAN  
DETECTIVE O'BRIEN  
DETECTIVE BRODY  
ENDICOTT SIMS  
DETECTIVE MCLEOD  
ARTHUR KINDRED  
PATROLMAN BARNES  
1ST CAT-BURGLAR (CHARLEY)  
2ND CAT-BURGLAR (LEWIS)  
HYSTERICAL WOMAN  
DR. SCHNEIDER  
LT. MONOGHAN  
SUSAN CARMICHAEL  
PATROLMAN KEOGH  
WILLY  
MISS HATCH  
MRS. FEENEY  
MR. FEENEY  
CRUMB-BUM  
MR. GALLANTZ  
MR. PRITCHETT  
MARY MCLEOD  
TAMI GIACOPPETTI  
PHOTOGRAPHER  
LADY  
GENTLEMAN  
INDIGNANT CITIZEN

And a stream of others who come and go ceaselessly

#### SCENE

##### ACT ONE

A day in August 5:30 P.M.

##### ACT TWO

7:30 P.M.

##### ACT THREE

8:30 P.M.

TIME—The Present

\* CAUTION: See restrictions on use of this play as noted in our permission acknowledgments for Random House, Inc.

The entire action of the play takes place in the detective squad room of a New York precinct police station

# ACT ONE

SCENE *The 21st Detective Squad second floor of the 21st Precinct Police Station New York City The major area of the stage is occupied by the squad room to the right separated by a door and an invisible wall we glimpse a fragment of the LIEUTENANTS office Severe nakedly institutional ghost-ridden, these rooms are shabby three quarters of a century old with an effluvium of their own compounded of seventy five years of the tears and blood of human anguish despair passion rage terror and violent death The walls are olive green to the waist and light green above In the wall upstage two ceiling high windows guarded by iron grill work The entrance stage left is surrounded by an iron railing with a swinging gate Tacked to the wall a height chart, next to it a folding fingerprint shelf above that a green shaded light Adjoining a bulletin board upon which are tacked several notices and photographs of criminals etc In the center of the room is the phone desk on which are two phones Down stage left is another desk on it a typewriter High on the main wall a large electric clock beneath it a duty board with replaceable celluloid letters reading On Duty—Det Gallagher Det Dakis, Lt Monaghan In the segment of the LIEUTENANTS office a desk a swivel chair several small chairs some files a water cooler a coat rack etc A small window in the LIEUTENANTS office looks out upon an air shaft Through it we catch a glimpse of the window of the wash room the door to which is upstage right*

*The light is fading It is late afternoon five twenty by the clock on the wall Through the main windows a magnificent view of the city and its towering sky scrapers dominating the panorama are a General Motors sign a church spire and a cross*

*At the curtains rise NICHOLAS DAKIS is seated at the typewriter desk making out a form and interrogating a young woman who has been picked up for shoplifting At the phone desk his partner, GALLAGHER is writing up some squeals and sipping Coca Cola from the bottle A traffic policeman in uniform pauses momentarily in the doorway to murmur a greeting to another uniformed policeman then they vanish DETECTIVE GALLAGHER is a young man third grade a novice about 27 years of age and good looking in spite of a broken nose The heat has him a little down he is sweating profusely and every once in a while he plucks at his moist shirt which clings to his body He and his partner DETECTIVE DAKIS are in their shirt sleeves, their collars open*

*DAKIS is a bull of a man as wide as he is high He has a voice like the roll of a kettle drum He is a middle aged Greek American He tackles his job efficiently and unemotionally in an apparently off hand casual manner—as indeed do most of the detectives*

*The SHOPLIFTER is a shapeless moronic little creature with a Bronx accent Her voice is the blat of a moose calf and in spite of her avowed guilt, she has all the innocence of ignorance*

DAKIS Hair? *Squints at her frazzled hair*

SHOPLIFTER Brown

DAKIS *typing hunt and peck system* Brown He squints at her eyes Eyes?

SHOPLIFTER Blue

DAKIS *types* Blue

*The phone rings GALLAGHER picks up the receiver*

GALLAGHER 21st Squad Detectives Gallagher Yes, Madame what is your name please? He reaches for a pencil and pad glances at the clock writes Address? Phone number? Plaza 9 1855 10

DAKIS Weight?

GALLAGHER *as the other desk phone rings* One second please He picks up the other receiver balancing the first on his shoulder 21st Squad Detectives Gallagher

SHOPLIFTER 109 I think

DAKIS *types* 109 will do He squints at her potato sack of a figure Height?

SHOPLIFTER I don't know About 20

DAKIS Stand up against the wall! He waves her to the height chart Over there

GALLAGHER, on phone Hello Loot No nothing A shoplifter Best's A pocketbook He calls to DAKIS Hey Nick what was the price on that purse she lifted?

SHOPLIFTER *mournfully* Six dollars

DAKIS *to the SHOPLIFTER* Five foot one All right come back The SHOPLIFTER returns to the desk

GALLAGHER, on the phone Six bucks 30

DAKIS Age?

SHOPLIFTER Twenty seven Corrects herself quickly Twenty two

DAKIS *squints at her types* Twenty—seven

GALLAGHER on the phone Right Loot It come in too late Night court Right chief He hangs up applies the other receiver Sorry Mrs Glances at his pad Andrews Yes Have you a list of just what's missing? It would help Any cash? You do? One of the servants? All right I'll be there Yes, Madame Hangs up, makes some notes on the scratch pad sips at the Coca Cola bottle 40

SHOPLIFTER My God the times I spent twice as much for a pocketbook

DAKIS *matter of fact, no animus* Well you took it

SHOPLIFTER I don't know why It was crazy



DAKIS *shrugs it off* It's your first offense You'll get off on probation

SHOPLIFTER I didn't need it I didn't even like it Crazy!

A burst of song off stage *an overmellow baritone pouring out Canio's heartbreak from I Pagliacci making up in vigor all that it lacks in sweetness*

*Ma il vizio alberga sol ne l'alma tua negletta* The

SHOPLIFTER *puzzled glances about hunches her shoulders at DAKIS inquisitively but he is absorbed in his work and he does not even glance up The singing comes closer More heartbreak! Tu viscere non hai sol legge* Enter GUS KEOGH *a uniformed policeman with a normally smiling smooth, white Irish face twisted for the moment with the agony of the tragic song he is pouring forth*

KEOGH *e l' senso a te* Breaks off *beaming* Got any 61's?

GALLAGHER A couple You're off key today Gus Hands him several slips KEOGH *studies them his face contorts again with the emotion of the song as he goes off*

KEOGH *vo ne lo sprezzo mio schiacciarti (and fades off down the hall with a sob)* sotto pie

DAKIS *risés crosses to fingerprint board rolls ink on pad beckons to the SHOPLIFTER Come here! The SHOPLIFTER crosses to DAKIS He takes her hand She stiffens He reassures her gently—in the interests of efficiency Take it easy girlie Let me do the work*

30 You just supply the finger SHOPLIFTER Ooh!!

DAKIS This finger Relax now, I'm not going to hurt you Just r r r roll it He presses her finger down on the sheet

GALLAGHER *glances up toward door into hallway at someone approaching Uh, uh! Here comes trouble To DAKIS Look at the calendar!*

DAKIS *glances at the calendar on the wall A full moon tonight*

40 GALLAGHER *groans It never fails Enter an elderly aristocratic looking woman dressed in the style of a by gone era GALLAGHER rises gallantly Come in, Mrs Farragut! Are those people still bothering you?*

MRS FARRAGUT Worse than ever Officer If I hadn't awakened last night and smelled that gas coming through the walls I'd be gone—we'd all be gone

GALLAGHER *solicitously* Have a chair

50 MRS FARRAGUT Why haven't you given me protection? I demand protection

GALLAGHER *conning her* I got twelve men on duty guarding you

MRS FARRAGUT But whose side are they really on? Are you sure you can trust them?

GALLAGHER *wounded* Mis Farragut! One of them is my own brother

MRS FARRAGUT Oh I'm sorry! I didn't mean to offend you She sits *leans toward him confidentially* Only it's so important You see they know I know all about it—Atom bombs! GALLAGHER *nods sagely* They're making them—these foreigners next door and they blow this atomic vapor through the wall at me And they have a man watching me from the top of the Empire State Building with radar

GALLAGHER That man we got covered

MRS FARRAGUT You have?

GALLAGHER Day and night

MRS FARRAGUT Does the President know about this? 70

GALLAGHER I talked to him only an hour ago

MRS FARRAGUT That's important very important These foreigners know I have electronic vision I can see everything around us vibrating with electricity

Billions of atoms like stars in a universe turning vibrating vibrating Out there in the streets ten million living dynamos—coming and going They create cross currents and those great tall skyscrapers draw all this human electricity to the top of the Empire State Building where that man sits and he turns it back and shoots it down on us It's a terrifying situation terrifying!! Do something! —Or it's the end of the world!! She rises, *having worked herself into a frenzy of terror*

JOE FEINSON *police reporter enters leans his head on the rail watching a tiny man few inches more than five feet exaggerated nose crooked features Joe's superficially wise-cracking police reporter attitude is only the persona with which he cloaks a genuine philosophic humanistic outlook Nothing escapes his humorous beady bird-like eyes*

GALLAGHER *risés crosses around to her, takes her arm reassuringly* Now, Mrs Farragut I'm watching it every second and I got it all under control Tell you what—I'm going to double the men I got guarding you Twenty-five picked men day and night How's that?

MRS FARRAGUT, *calms down* Oh, that's better Much better Thank you

Exit MRS FARRAGUT

GALLAGHER, *plucking at his damp shirt* Get out the butterfly net

JOE You give the customers a good massage

GALLAGHER Hell this job is ninety percent salesmanship!

DAKIS *finishes the fingerprints* O K girlie, wash your hands In there! He points to the wash room door The SHOPLIFTER crosses to the wash room dangling her lamp blacked fingers before her so as not to soil her dress

JOE What's new?

GALLAGHER It's quiet Knocks wood

JOE The towns dead as Kelceys *He saunters over to GALLAGHERS desk*

SHOPLIFTER, *opens the door, frowning calls out*  
There isnt any lock on the door

DAKIS Just wash your hands girlie

SHOPLIFTER *indignant* A fine howdoyoudo! *She slams the door*

JOE Story for me?

GALLAGHER No Shoplifter

10 JOE She anybody?

GALLAGHER Nobody at all

JOE Any angles?

GALLAGHER Nah! Just a slob

*Two detectives enter One of them CALLAHAN is very exuberant and high spirited Tenth Avenue in his speech dressed in a yellow polo shirt and baggy trousers which do not match his wrinkled jacket The other, DETECTIVE O'BRIEN is an older man spectacled neatly dressed soft spoken*

20 CALLAHAN *tears off his jacket revealing the full splendor of his polo shirt—Hawaiian in motif with brilliant foliage woven into the pattern* Hi Tom Nick Joe! Phew its hot out! Sweat your kolonjas off!

JOE What the hell are you dressed up for? Must be Halloween?

CALLAHAN I wonder what he means?

O'BRIEN Saks Fifth Avenue pays Mike to advertise their clothes

30 CALLAHAN Gese were we given a run around! We tailed a guy for two hours from Fifty thoid to Ninety foist and back I thought for sure, This one belongs to us

O'BRIEN Looked like a good man

CALLAHAN Then the jerko took a bus *Glances at the schedule hanging on the wall* Moider! Sunday again! What the hell am I?—A Sunday detective? My kidsll grow up they wont even know me To

JOE Say Joe theres a big story on Thoid Avenue  
40 You get it? The brewery truck?

JOE No what about it?

CALLAHAN A brewery truck backed up into the sidewalk and a barrel of beer fell right out inna baby carriage

JOE *rising* Was the baby in it?

CALLAHAN Yeah

JOE Was it killed?

CALLAHAN No, it was light beer! Boyeeng! *He doubles over holding his sides with laughter* Ha, ha, ha!  
50

JOE *groans and sinks back into his chair* Youre a cute kid Whats your name, Berle?

*The SHOPLIFTER returns from the wash-room As she crosses CALLAHAN studies her face, squinting his eyes professionally*

O'BRIEN Busy day?

GALLAGHER Quiet

O'BRIEN Good *He knocks wood*

GALLAGHER Too quiet

O'BRIEN Were due Were ripe for a homicide 60

GALLAGHER Ssh Wait till I get out of here *The desk phone rings GALLAGHER groans* Cant you keep your big mouth shut? *He picks up the receiver* 21st Squad Detectives Gallagher Yes Madame Thats right Where? Now what is it you lost?

JOE Her virginity

GALLAGHER In a taxicab?

JOE Hell of a place!

GALLAGHER Did you get his number? Can you describe it? 70

JOE This is going to be educational

GALLAGHER Whats your name? Address? Yes Madame Ill check that for you Not at all

JOE, *simultaneously with GALLAGHERS last speech* I got a squeal for you I lost something My man hood

CALLAHAN We dont take cases *that old Joe GALLAGHER, hanging up* Outlawed by the statute of limitations

DETECTIVE LOU BRODY *enters with several containers of coffee Coca-Colas and a bag of sandwiches BRODY is a huge man deceptively obese and clumsy in appearance bald head ugly carbuncled face lit up however by sad soft gentle eyes He hands one bag to DAKIS* 80

BRODY Here you are Nick!

DAKIS I appreciate that

BRODY My pleasure Here you are Miss

SHOPLIFTER With Russian Dressing? *Standing up searching in her purse* 90

BRODY They ran out *He crosses places the remaining sandwiches and coffee on the long table then goes into the LIEUTENANT'S office, hangs his hat and jacket on the coat tree*

SHOPLIFTER How much do I owe you?

DAKIS Its on the house

SHOPLIFTER Youre all awful decent, really awful decent

DAKIS Well you didnt kill anyone

*A man carrying a briefcase enters stands at the gate a moment, taps on it impatiently He is about thirty-five, erect in bearing sharply chiseled features self possessed apparently immune to the heat he is crisp and cool even to the starched collar When he speaks his voice is equally crisp and starched and carries considerable authority* 100

GALLAGHER Yes sir?

*The MAN fishes a card out of his wallet and presents it*

MAN My name is Sims Endicott Sims Im an attorney 110

GALLAGHER What can we do for you Counselor?

SIMS I represent Mr Kurt Schneider Your office has a warrant out for him?

DAKIS Hey Lou! This is Jim's squeal ain't it?  
Kurt Schneider?

BRODY Yeah I'll take it *Crosses to SIMS* This is my partner's case What about Schneider, Counselor? Where is he?

SIMS He's ready to surrender himself into your custody

BRODY Fine bring him in

SIMS First, however I have here some photographs *He takes some pictures from his brief case and hands them to BRODY* He had these taken an hour ago

BRODY, *examines them makes a face* Nudes? Ugly ain't he?

SIMS *smiles wryly* He's no Mr. America

BRODY No that he ain't

SIMS The purpose is not aesthetic I don't want any rubber hoses used on him

BRODY Counselor, how long have you been practicing law? We don't assault our prisoners

SIMS Who's handling this case here?

BRODY My partner

SIMS A man named James McLeod?

BRODY Yeah

SIMS I've heard a good deal about him A law unto himself You will please tell him for me

BRODY Wait a minute Tell him for yourself Here he is

JAMES MC LEOD *enters his big hand gripping the arm of a stunned, sensitive looking young man whom he guides into the room* JAMES MC LEOD is tall lean handsome, has powerful shoulders, uncompromising mouth a studied immobile, mask-like facies betrayed by the deep set impatient, mocking eyes which reveal the quick flickers of mood the deep passions of the man possessed by his own demon

BRODY Oh, Jim this is your squeal To SIMS This is Detective McLeod Mr. Sims

MC LEOD How do you do, sir? *Takes out a handkerchief, mops his brow wipes the sweat band of his hat*

SIMS How do you do?

BRODY Mr. Sims is an attorney

MC LEOD And very clever I've seen him in court

SIMS Thank you

BRODY He's here for Kurt Schneider

MC LEOD, *the quick flicker of mockery in his eyes* Oh yes To SIMS I had the pleasure of arresting your client a year ago

SIMS So I am informed

MC LEOD He's changed his lawyer since if not his business

SIMS Kurt Schneider is a successful truck farmer from New Jersey

MC LEOD With a little abortion mill in New York for a sideline Nothing fancy, just a quick ice tong job I've a considerable yen for your client

SIMS I'm aware of that To BRODY Show him those pictures! BRODY *hands the photographs to MC LEOD*

MC LEOD *looks at the pictures, grimaces* There's no doubt the process of evolution is beginning to reverse itself

SIMS You understand, Officer that my client has certain rights I am here to see that those rights are respected

MC LEOD *urbanely* One second, Counselor I'll be right with you Have a chair *He guides the young man into the squad room*

GALLAGHER Jim call your wife!

MC LEOD Thanks Tom *He searches the young man for weapons, the quick frisk ankles, legs thighs front and rear* All right Buster Sit down over there To GALLAGHER When'd she phone?

GALLAGHER Twenty minutes ago *The phone rings* 21st Squad Detectives Gallagher Yes, sir *He hands the phone to MC LEOD* The Lieutenant

MC LEOD *takes the phone and it is evident from his grimace at the phone that he has no great love for his LIEUTENANT* He sits on the desk Yes Lieutenant? I just got back

JOE *crosses down drapes himself on the chair next to MC LEOD* Hiya Seamus!

MC LEOD *smothers the mouthpiece of the phone, murmurs quickly* Oh Yussel Yussel! You're supposed to be an intelligent reporter

JOE What's the matter Seamus?

MC LEOD That Langdon story!

JOE Didn't I spell your name right?

MC LEOD It's the only thing you did get right *On the phone* Yes Lieutenant I just brought him in To ARTHUR Arthur, were you arrested before?

ARTHUR I told you

MC LEOD Tell me again

ARTHUR No

MC LEOD *back to phone* Says no We'll check his prints Yes sir Yes sir *He covers the mouthpiece* You're degenerating into a real sob-sister, Yussel Grum gray prison walls! Wish you'd have seen Langdon in the bull-pen Hiya, Jack! Hiya Charley! Smiling He was happy! He was home again! *On phone* Yes Lieutenant Yes sir

JOE The mortal God—McLeod! Captain Ahab pursuing the great gray Leviathan! A fox with rabies bit him in the ass when he was two years old and neither of them recovered Don't throw water on him He goes rabid!

MC LEOD *hangs up pulls JOE's bow tie* You apple-headed member of the fourth estate, to look natural you should have a knife and fork sticking out of the top of your head City College is going to be proud of you yet! *Rises talks Yiddish* Mir daft ihr dihagginun!

JOE *laughs, ties his tie* Is this story worth a picture?

MC LEOD Mm Possibly To ARTHUR Don't try running for it Buste! You'd just about reach that door and suddenly you'd put on weight Bullets are supersonic

ARTHUR Don't worry

MC LEOD I won't Either way

BRODY *at the sound of the young man's voice stops and turns quickly He comes over scrutinizes the young man's face*

10 MC LEOD Know him?

BRODY No No I *Shakes his head*

MC LEOD *calls across the room to MR SIMS One second Counselor He crosses to the LIEUTENANT'S office comes face to face with CALLAHAN He pauses to survey CALLAHAN'S sartorial splendor Shakes his head Strictly Pier 6!*

CALLAHAN I ain't no friggin barber-college detective with pleats in my pants

20 MC LEOD *sardonically* No, you ain't *Goes into LIEUTENANT'S office, closes the door dials a number*

CALLAHAN, *miffed* Remind me to get that college graduate a bicycle pump for Christmas to blow up that big head of his

O BRIEN *and GALLAGHER laugh*

O BRIEN He needling you again?

CALLAHAN Mm! Big needle man from sew and sew

30 MC LEOD *on the phone* Hello, darling *His voice at once takes on warmth and tenderness his eyes his smile his whole being seem to undergo a metamorphosis* What did the doctor say? Thank God! Nothing organic? Sure now Mary? How does he explain those palpitations? Psycho-somatic? Mm! And how does he explain that?

What tensions? *Laughs* What'd he prescribe short of a new world? Phenobarbital and Vitamin B one? The history of our time *He laughs* Oh Mary! You're wonderful! I love you! Of course I was worried sick  
40 Mm Yes Thank you my angel I'll call you later Good bye

*In the squad room ARTHUR'S face turns gray, he clutches his stomach and bites his lip BRODY, who has been studying him crosses to him*

BRODY What's the matter, sonny?

ARTHUR Nothing

BRODY *points to the wash room ARTHUR crosses to it quickly Once inside alone his bravado falls away He is a sick and desperate boy He dry retches over the sink for a moment Breathing heavily he looks about in sudden panic*

50 BRODY *glances toward the wash room goes to his files takes out a bottle goes to the wash room props open the door stands there watching ARTHUR controls himself turns on the water in the sink buries his face in it BRODY takes a paper cup, pours out a drink offers it to him Have a bomb?*

ARTHUR No thanks *Dries his face*

BRODY *tosses off the drink himself They return to the squad room The desk phone rings GALLAGHER reaches for it* 60

BRODY, *glances at the clock* O K Tom I'll take over now Go on home *Picks up the phone*

GALLAGHER Home? I got a squeal *Goes off into the next room*

BRODY *on the phone* 21st Squad Detective Brody Yeah? Get his license number? *He glances at the clock scribbles data on a pad*

MC LEOD *enters the squad room, crosses to MR SIMS* Now, Counselor? 70

SIMS *presents him with the photographs again* You will observe there are no scars or lacerations of any kind! *Points to photos* This is the way I'm delivering my client to you and this is the way I want him back

MC LEOD *studies them gravely* I should think that any change whatsoever would be an improvement, Counselor

SIMS I want you to know I'm not going to allow you to violate his Constitutional rights You're not to abuse him physically or degrade his dignity as a human being do you understand? 80

MC LEOD *bites this off sharply* Counselor I never met a criminal yet who didn't wrap himself in the Constitution from head to toe or a hoodlum who wasn't filled to the nostrils with habeas corpus and the rights of human dignity Did you ever see the girl your client operated on last year—in the morgue—on the marble slab? Wasn't much human left of her Counselor—and very little dignity! 90

SIMS My client was innocent of that charge The court acquitted him

MC LEOD He was guilty

SIMS Are you setting yourself above the courts of the land?

MC LEOD There's a higher court Counselor

SIMS I'm sure there is Office! Are you qualified to speak for it? I'm not God doesn't come down and whisper in my ear But when it comes to the man made law on terra firma I know it I obey it and I respect it 100

MC LEOD What do you want to do?—Try the case here? This isn't a court Save it for the Judge Now Counselor I'm busy Your client will be treated with as much delicacy as he is entitled to So bring him in—or get off the pot

SIMS I've heard about you You're quite an anomaly McLeod, quite an anomaly It's going to be a real pleasure to examine you on the witness stand

MC LEOD Anything to give you a thrill Counselor 110

SIMS We may have a thrill or two in store for you MC LEOD Meaning?

SIMS For over a year you personally have been making my client's life a living hell Why?

MC LEOD I beg your pardon

SIMS Why?

MC LEOD *sardonically* Because I'm annoyed by criminals that get away with murder. They upset me

SIMS You're easily upset

MC LEOD Oh I'm *very* sensitive *Dismissing him* To me your client is just another criminal *Turns away* O.K., Arthur! In there! *He indicates the*

10 LIEUTENANT'S OFFICE ARTHUR *rises enters the office*

SIMS That's your story. At considerable expense we have investigated and discovered *otherwise*

MC LEOD *turns to stare at him* SIMS *smiles knowingly and goes*

BRODY What the hell's he diving at?

MC LEOD A fishing expedition. That's a shrewd mouthpiece. I've seen him operate. *He enters the LIEUTENANT'S OFFICE* To ARTHUR Empty your pockets! Take everything out! Put it on the desk! ARTHUR *empties the contents of his pockets on the desk* That all?

20

ARTHUR Yes

MC LEOD Turn your pockets inside out ARTHUR *obeys* Sit down! Over there! What'd you do with the money?

ARTHUR I spent it

MC LEOD *examines the articles one by one very carefully* All of it?

ARTHUR Yes

30 MC LEOD *picks up a book of matches* When were you at the Stoik Club?

ARTHUR Wednesday night

MC LEOD Been doing the hot spots?

ARTHUR Some

MC LEOD Any of the money left?

ARTHUR How far can you go with four hundred dollars?

MC LEOD Four hundred and eighty

ARTHUR Was it four eighty?

40 MC LEOD So your employer claims

ARTHUR He ought to know

MC LEOD Arthur why'd you take the money?

ARTHUR What's the difference? I took it, I admit it I took it!

MC LEOD Where'd you spend last night?

ARTHUR In my room

MC LEOD I was there. Where were you? Under the bed?

ARTHUR I sat in the Park

50 MC LEOD All night?

ARTHUR Yes

MC LEOD It rained

ARTHUR Drizzled

MC LEOD You sat in the drizzle?

ARTHUR Yes

MC LEOD What were you doing?

ARTHUR Just dreaming

MC LEOD In the park at night?—Dreaming?

ARTHUR Night is the time for dreams

MC LEOD And thieves! *He examines the articles in ARTHUR'S pockets* The phone in the squad room rings BRODY *answers*

60

BRODY 21st Squad Detective Brody Callahan for you!

CALLAHAN *crosses to phone throws a parking ticket on the desk* A kiss from Judge Bromfield *Into phone* Callahan 21st

JOE *examines the ticket* You get a parking ticket?

DAKIS *morosely* I got one too. In front of the Criminal Court Building. You're such a big shot Joe why don't you throw a little weight around?

70

JOE Mind if I use the phone?

BRODY *nods* The outside one

JOE *dials a number*

O'BRIEN Some of these judges haven't the brains God gave them. They refrigerate them in law school.

DAKIS It isn't enough we use our own cars to take prisoners to court and our own gas—we can't even deduct it from our income tax. Where's your justice?

80

JOE *into phone* Hello Jerry—this is Joe Femson. Suddenly *yelling at the top of his lungs* Who the hell does that Judge Bromfield think he is?

He's persecuting cops that's what! Parking tickets on duty. I'm going to stir up the goddamnedest hornet's nest! All right! All right! *Calmly* Yeah.

Fine. Sure. I got one here. Yeah. *He hangs up takes the ticket* O.K. Forget it. It's fixed. *Crosses to get DAKIS ticket*

O'BRIEN You frightened him?

90

JOE I frightened myself. *Holds up his trembling hand* Look at my hand! Shaking!

DAKIS *laughs—a bellow that makes the room vibrate*

CALLAHAN A cop's got to get a reporter to fix a ticket for him. I seen everything now.

JOE That's the way it should be. A free press is the toxin of a free people. The law keeps you in line, we keep the law in line. The people keep us in line. You keep the people in line. Everybody kicks everybody else in the ass! That way nobody gets too big for his britches. That's democracy! *Crosses to the gate*

100

DAKIS You have the gall to call that yellow, monopolistic sheet—a free press? Ha! Ha! *Bellows again* You kill me!

*Exit JOE waving the ticket triumphantly*

SHOPLIFTER So

DAKIS So what?

SHOPLIFTER So what happens to me now?

110

DAKIS We wait here till night court opens. Nine o'clock. Then the magistrate will probably set bail for you.

O BRIEN Have you got a lawyer? You might save the bail bond

SHOPLIFTER My brother in law's a lawyer

DAKIS *belches* Excuse me Call him up

SHOPLIFTER Gee I hate to He's kind of a new brother in law If my sister finds out oh God! she'll die! And she's in the fourth month too

O BRIEN It's up to you

DAKIS Suit yourself The court'll appoint you one

10 SHOPLIFTER Gee I don't know what to do!

MC LEOD *completes his examination of the articles in ARTHUR'S pockets* Ever been arrested before, Arthur?

ARTHUR I told you no

MC LEOD You sure?

ARTHUR Yes

MC LEOD It would help your case if you returned the money

ARTHUR I know But I can't I told you it's gone

20 BRODY *enters the LIEUTENANT'S office and listens to the interrogation*

MC LEOD What's this pawn ticket for?

ARTHUR Textbooks

MC LEOD Where did you get them?

ARTHUR College

MC LEOD Graduate?

ARTHUR No

MC LEOD What stopped you?

ARTHUR World War Two the first time

30 MC LEOD And the second time?

ARTHUR World War Three

MC LEOD Foolish question foolish answer *Examining contents of ARTHUR'S pockets* Have you any identifying marks on you Arthur? Any scars? Roll up your sleeves ARTHUR *obeys* *On his left wrist is a tattoo mark* A tattoo mark A heart And what's the name? J—O—Y! Who's Joy?

ARTHUR A girl

MC LEOD You girl?

40 ARTHUR No

MC LEOD Whose girl?

ARTHUR What's the difference?

MC LEOD What branch of the service were you in?

ARTHUR Navy

MC LEOD How long?

ARTHUR Five years

MC LEOD What rank?

ARTHUR Chief Petty Officer

MC LEOD You married?

50 ARTHUR No

MC LEOD How old are you?

ARTHUR Twenty seven

MC LEOD How long you been in New York?

ARTHUR A year

MC LEOD Where you from?

ARTHUR Ann Arbor Michigan

MC LEOD What's your father's business?

ARTHUR My father's dead

MC LEOD What was his business?

ARTHUR He was a teacher Music History of 60 music

MC LEOD History of music? He must've been proud of you Where's your mother?

ARTHUR She's dead

MC LEOD *looking through ARTHUR'S address book* Ah! Here's Joy again—Joy Carmichael Maybe I better give her a ring

ARTHUR What for? Why drag her in this? She doesn't know anything about it

MC LEOD *mockingly* You wouldn't lie to me, 70 would you Arthur?

ARTHUR Why should I lie?

MC LEOD I don't know Why should you steal? Maybe it's because you're just no damn good hm Arthur? The judge asks me and I'm going to throw the book at you —Tattoo *that* on your arm! MC LEOD *rises*

BRODY Admission?

MC LEOD Yes

BRODY Get the money?

MC LEOD No He doesn't milk easily A superman 80 I've got an angle *Crosses into the squad-room dials phone*

BRODY *to ARTHUR* Sonny you look like a nice boy How'd you get into this mess?

ARTHUR *rises* What is this? Are you going to give me a sermon?

BRODY Don't get funny with me, son I'll knock you right through the floor! Sit down! ARTHUR *sits* How'd you get into this mess son? 90

ARTHUR I don't know You get trapped

BRODY Where's the money?

ARTHUR *shakes his head* Gone! It's gone

BRODY What did you do with it?

ARTHUR Spent it

BRODY *pauses takes out a cigarette offers ARTHUR one lights them* You went to college? What did you study?

ARTHUR Majored in History

BRODY History? What for?

ARTHUR To teach I wanted to be a teacher 100

BRODY Much of a career in that?

ARTHUR I used to think so

BRODY You're a long way from home?

ARTHUR Yes

BRODY Why didn't you finish?

ARTHUR No time The war washed that up There's no time You can't start from scratch at 25 BRODY *studies him shakes his head The sudden babble of voices is heard off* 110

MC LEOD *looks up from phone* Uh uh! Here comes trouble! A couple of customers

A uniformed policeman, Negro enters herding in front of him two burglars handcuffed to each other

*They are followed by other policemen, a hysterical woman and at the tail of the parade, WILLY, the janitor, with broom pail and inquisitive look.*

*The Negro policeman is a big man of erect carriage with a fine intelligent face. The two burglars are a study in contrasting personalities. The first is nervous, thin, short, wiry, with long expressive hands that are never still, forever weaving in and out. He has jet black hair which keeps falling over his forehead in bangs, tiny black eyes, an olive complexion and a slight Italian accent. He is protesting his innocence with percussive indignation. He is wearing an expensive suit and a pink shirt with no tie. The second burglar is a chunky, sandy-haired young fellow, slow moving, slower-thinking, who is inclined to take this arrest as a minor nuisance at worst. He is wearing a zoot suit with extremely narrow cuffs on the trousers. He moves slouching slowly, swaying from side to side. There is something off beat something disturbing about both these men. WILLY the janitor, is a thin, slow, grizzled man with a pock marked face and a moth eaten tooth brush moustache. He wears a worn black shirt and old torn trousers. The hysterical woman is a short, dumpy, elderly Frenchwoman whose hair is in disarray and whose slip is showing. She is wringing her hands, crying and gabbling half in French, half in English. As they enter, they are all talking at once. The first burglars percussive cries and the Frenchwoman's wails dominate the hubbub.*

BRODY, hearing the noise, crosses back into squad room.

MC LEOD: What have you got there?

BARNES (NEGRO PATROLMAN): Burglars! Caught 'em red handed. Forcible entry.

WOMAN, in a French accent: I come up to my apartment. The door was open. The lock was burst wide open. The jamb was broken down. They were inside. I started to run. This one grabbed me and choked me.

1ST BURGLAR: It's a lie! It's a pack of lies! I don't know what she's talking about.

BARNES: I was right across the street when I heard her scream. They come running down the stairs. I collared them. This one put up a struggle.

1ST BURGLAR, screaming: I was walking down the stairs mindin' my own business—the cop jumps on me and starts beatin' the crap outa me.

MC LEOD roars: All right! The first burglar stops screaming, pantomimes his innocence. We'll come to you. He takes his revolver out of his holster, puts it in his pocket. BRODY takes out his revolver, places it in the desk drawer. DAKIS does likewise. This is official routine which CALLAHAN alone neglects to observe.

1ST BURGLAR, softly: Think I'm crazy to do a thing like this?

BRODY: Sh! You'll get your turn to talk. Sit down. BARNES: On this one I found this jimmy, and this. Takes out a jimmy and a revolver, hands them to MC LEOD.

BRODY: Twenty-two?

MC LEOD nods: Loaded. He unloads the cylinder, places the cartridges on the desk.

BRODY to the 1ST BURGLAR: What's your name? Stand up! Searches him more thoroughly.

1ST BURGLAR: Gennini. Charles Gennini. And I don't know nothin'. I don't even know this guy. Ask him! To the other BURGLAR: Do I know you? To BRODY: No!

BRODY: Take it easy, Charley. Sit down! To the other BURGLAR: What's your name?

2ND BURGLAR: Lewis Abbott.

BRODY brandishes revolver and jimmy: Were you carrying these, Lewis?

LEWIS thinks for a moment, nods, unemotionally: Ya.

WOMAN, begins to cry: By the throat he grabbed me! How can this happen in New York?

MC LEOD gently: Take it easy, Madame. You're all right now. Sit down, Madame. I'll get you a glass of water.

WOMAN: Oh, please, please!

MC LEOD crosses to the water-cooler.

BRODY searches LEWIS: You're a bad boy, Lewis, and what's more, you're a bad thief. Don't you know a good thief never carries a loaded pistol? It means five years added to your sentence, Lewis.

LEWIS: I'd never use it.

BRODY: That's what you think, Lewis. But it did happen. You're lucky you were picked up. Probably saved you from a murder rap. Just once you'd walk in a woman, she'd scream, resist, you'd get scared.

CALLAHAN: Boom! Boom! Sings a funeral dirge. Ta da de da de da de da de dum.

BRODY: You like the smell of a burning flesh? Your own?

LEWIS thinks, shakes his head: Na.

MC LEOD returns with the glass of water, hands it to the hysterical woman.

BRODY: Getting dropped today was the luckiest thing ever happened to you, Lewis. Turns to CHARLEY: Now, you!

CHARLEY rises. BRODY searches him more carefully. CHARLEY his hands weaving: I got nothing to do with this. I swear. You think I got rocks in my head?

BRODY, producing a large wad of bills from CHARLEY's pockets: Look at this!

MC LEOD: Quite a bundle! How much is here, Charley?

CHARLEY: Fourteen hundred bucks.

MC LEOD digs into his own pocket, takes out a slim roll of bills: Eleven! Why is it every time one of



you bums come in you've got fourteen hundred dol-  
lais in your kick and I've got eleven in mine?

BRODY You don't live right

MC LEOD No evidently not To CHARLEY Where'd  
you get this?

CHARLEY I saved it I worked

MC LEOD Where?

CHARLEY I was a buicklayer

MC LEOD *hands the money to the PATROLMAN*  
10 Count it! This goes to the custodian We don't want  
Charley suing us To CHARLEY Let's see your hands!  
*He feels them* The only thing you ever laid,  
Charley was a two dollar floozy

CALLAHAN Do you always carry so much money  
around?

CHARLEY Yeah

MC LEOD What's the matter Charley don't you  
trust the banks?

BRODY When were you in stu last Charley?

20 CHARLEY Me? In jail? Never! I swear to God on  
a stack of Bibles!

MC LEOD What's your B number?

CHARLEY I ain't got none

MC LEOD You sure?

CHARLEY On my mother's grave I ain't got no  
B card

CALLAHAN You're stupid

MC LEOD *looks at the others, shakes his head and*  
*laughs softly* You just gave yourself away Charley  
30 How do you know what a B card is if you never had  
one?

CHARLEY I heard I been around

MC LEOD I'll bet you have You've been working  
this precinct since October

CHARLEY No I swear

MC LEOD *laughs in his face* Who the hell do you  
think you're kidding? CHARLEY *glares at him* I know  
that face This is a good man He's been in jail  
before

40 CHARLEY Never so help me God! What're you  
tryin' to do hang me? I wanta call my lawyer

MC LEOD Shut up! Print him You'll find he's got  
a sheet as long as your arm

CHARLEY I don't know what you're talkin' about  
I swear to God! I get down on my knees *He*  
*falls to his knees crying* What do you want me  
to

MC LEOD Get up! Get up! I can smell you Hes  
a cat burglar A real murderer!

50 CALLAHAN How many women you raped? CAL-  
LAHAN *stands near by, his back to the prisoner, his*  
*revolver sticking out of the holster* CHARLEY *looks*  
*at it licks his lips*

MC LEOD *to CALLAHAN* Watch the noscoe! What's  
the matter with you? CALLAHAN *takes his revolver*  
*out of his holster puts it in his pocket* To CHARLEY  
Sit down! Over there

WOMAN Isn't anybody going to take care of me?

MC LEOD Look Madame! You're very upset We  
don't need you here Why don't you go home and  
rest up? 60

WOMAN No no no! I am afraid to go back there  
now I'm afraid even to go out in the street

MC LEOD *laughs* Now come on! You've got noth-  
ing to be afraid of

WOMAN No no! I am! I am afraid

MC LEOD Suppose I send a policeman with you?

What time do you expect your husband back?

WOMAN Seven o'clock

MC LEOD I'll send a policeman home with you to  
keep you company A nice handsome Irish cop  
How's that? 70

WOMAN, *thinks it over, giggles at him nods* That  
would be fine Thank you very much!

MC LEOD *turns her over to KEOGH* Gus, see that  
this lady gets home safely

GUS *grinning takes her in tow* Exit GUS and the  
woman giggling

SHOPLIFTER I think I better call my brother in  
law 80

DAKIS What's the number?

SHOPLIFTER Jerome 7 2577

DAKIS *crosses to phone dials the number*

BRODY *moves a chair center turns to LEWIS* Now  
Lewis sit down! LEWIS *sits* You're in trouble

MC LEOD *steps close to LEWIS* You help us well  
help you We'll ask the D A to give you a break

BRODY Tell us the truth How many burglaries you  
committed here? LEWIS *is silent* BRODY *hands him a*  
*cigarette* 90

CALLAHAN, *comes in from behind lights his ciga-*  
*rette* Be a man You got dropped! Face it!

O'BRIEN *closes the circle around LEWIS* Why not  
get the agony over with?

CALLAHAN If you don't we're gonna get the D A  
to throw away the key

DAKIS *to SHOPLIFTER holding out the phone* Here  
you are girly! Come and get it

SHOPLIFTER *crossing rapidly* O God what'll I tell  
her? What should I say? *She takes the phone and* 100  
*assumes her most casual sing song* Hello Milly!

Yeah! Nothin'! I just didn't have any change  
How are you? Yeah? Fine! How was the party? You  
went to Brooklyn? In your delicate condition? Milly!  
*She laughs feebly* Say Milly is Jack there by any  
chance? Could I talk to him? Oh nothin'! Some  
friend of mine wants some advice on somethin' I  
don't know what *She puts phone down* He's there  
What should I tell him? I don't know what to tell  
him 110

DAKIS Tell him to meet you at night court 100  
Center Street

SHOPLIFTER Shall I tell him to bring hard cash?

DAKIS He'll know better than we

SHOPLIFTER, *whispers hoarsely into phone* Hello Jack? Listen—can Milly hear me? I don't want her to know but I'm in a jam I need your help So don't let on Make out like it's nothing I can't give you all the details I'm at the police station Yeah I took a bag Best's *Blatting* I had to admit it Jack it was on my arm Thanks Jack! 100 Center Street If Milly asks tell her Gee Jack you're a  
*She hangs up slowly sighs with relief to* DETECTIVE DAKIS Boy! Am I relieved!

ENDICOTT SIMS *appears with* KURT SCHNEIDER *and they stand within the gate talking softly* SCHNEIDER *is gaunt neatly attired dark sullen narrow ferret like face bulging eyes well trimmed waxed moustache*

MC LEOD *coming out of the* LIEUTENANT'S office, *crosses to them* Hello Kurt! Come on in

SIMS *to* MC LEOD I have advised my client of his legal rights He will answer no questions other than his name and address Remember Kurt! Name and address that's all Is that understood?

MC LEOD As you say Counselor  
 SIMS When are you going to book him?  
 MC LEOD In a couple of hours when we get around to it

SIMS I want to arrange his bail bond  
 MC LEOD You'll have to get Judge Crater to stand bail for him

SIMS Suppose you tend to your business and I'll tend to mine

MC LEOD I'll be glad to if you'll get the hell out of here and let me

SIMS Remember, Kurt! Name and address that's all *Exit*

MC LEOD Sit down, Kurt Over here! How've you been?

KURT So, so

MC LEOD You look fit That farm life agrees with you Some coffee, Kurt?

KURT You got enough?

MC LEOD There's plenty *Pours some* Here you are! Sandwich?

KURT I just ate

MC LEOD Cruller?

KURT I'm full—

MC LEOD Be right with you *Hands him a news paper crosses to the phone looks up a number in his notebook dials it*

BRODY, *to* PATROLMAN BARNES *pointing at* CHARLEY *and indicating the wash room* Steve!

PATROLMAN BARNES *nods* Come on Charley, in here! *Takes CHARLEY off into the wash room*

BRODY, *to* LEWIS Charley let you carry the gun and the jummy You're the one that's going to burn Don't you see how he's crossed you?

CALLAHAN You ever hear of the guy who sold his buddy up the river for thirty pieces of silver?

LEWIS Ya *The ring of men closes around* LEWIS O'BRIEN Well? Think!

BRODY When were you in jail last? *Silence* 60

MC LEOD Look Lewis we're gonna finger print you In half an hour we'll know your whole record anyway

BRODY Make it easy for yourself How many burglaries you committed in New York Lewis?

LEWIS What'll I get?

CALLAHAN Were you in jail before?

LEWIS Ya Elmira I got out in March

BRODY How long were you in?

LEWIS Three and a half years 70

BRODY What for?

LEWIS Burglary

BRODY Well I'd say seven and a half to ten maybe less if you co-operate if not—fifteen to twenty!

LEWIS What do you want to know?

BRODY How many burglaries you committed in New York?

LEWIS Nine or ten

CALLAHAN That's better 80

BRODY What'd you do with the stuff?

LEWIS Gave it to Charley

CALLAHAN He was in on it then?

LEWIS Ya

BRODY You sell it?

LEWIS Ya

BRODY Where?

LEWIS In Boston I think

BRODY You *think*? Didn't he tell you?

LEWIS Na 90

CALLAHAN You're a bit of a shmuck ain't you Lewis?

BRODY No Lewis is regular He's co-operating *To* LEWIS How much did he give you altogether?

LEWIS Half Four hundred dollars

CALLAHAN Wha a t?

BRODY This stuff was worth thirty to forty thousand dollars

LEWIS Charley said it was mostly fake

BRODY Look! Here's the list! See for yourself! 100

LEWIS *looks at it his face drops*

MC LEOD Lewis you've been robbed!

LEWIS Ya

BRODY Where does Charley live?

LEWIS 129th Street West I know the house I don't know the number I can show it to you

BRODY Fine

DAKIS *crosses to the toilet opens the door, nods to* PATROLMAN BARNES *who brings CHARLEY back into the room* 110

CALLAHAN That's using your *Taps* LEWIS head tokas Lewis

LIEUTENANT MONOGHAN *enters He is an old time police officer ruddy moon-faced a cigar always*

*thrust in the jaw, gray hair muscle gone a bit to fat, his speech, crude New Yorkese interlarded with the vivid thieves vernacular crackles with authority*

O BRIEN Hello Chief!

BRODY Hi Lieutenant!

LIEUTENANT *looking around* Busy house!

O BRIEN Yes sir we're bouncin' all of a sudden

CALLAHAN John! Got your car here? O BRIEN *nods*

Run us over? We're gonna hit this bum's flat, Chief

10 LIEUTENANT *squints at LEWIS* What's your name?

LEWIS Lewis Abbott

CALLAHAN *shows* LIEUTENANT *the jimmy* Look at this *Shows him the gun* and this

LIEUTENANT Loaded?

CALLAHAN Yeah

BRODY *indicating* CHARLEY The other burglar

LIEUTENANT What's your name?

CHARLEY Gennini I don't know nothing about this Lieutenant I was

20 LIEUTENANT *snorts turns his back on* CHARLEY Print him!

CALLAHAN Yes sir

LIEUTENANT Who made the collar?

BRODY Uniform and Patrolman Barnes

LIEUTENANT *to* BARNES Nice goin'!

MC LEOD *indicating* KURT *to* LIEUTENANT Kurt Schneider Turned himself in

LIEUTENANT That mouthpiece of his got hold of me downstairs chewed my ear off I wanna have a talk with you *Beckons him inside*

30 DAKIS Chailey, on your feet! Let's go *Leads CHARLEY over to the finger print board and prints him*

MC LEOD *in the* LIEUTENANT'S office *indicates* ARTHUR Kindred The Pritchett complaint

LIEUTENANT Admission?

MC LEOD Yes

LIEUTENANT Step inside, lad—In there *He indicates an ante room off right* ARTHUR *exits off right*

40 *To* MC LEOD Shut the door MC LEOD *shuts door to the squad room* The LIEUTENANT *takes off his hat and jacket, tosses them onto the coat rack* On Schneider—what's your poison angle?

MC LEOD *subtly mimics the* LIEUTENANT'S speech Poison angle! None Why?

LIEUTENANT, *looks up sharply* His mouthpiece hinted at something or other

MC LEOD Fishing expedition

LIEUTENANT You sure?

50 MC LEOD Sure I'm sure What did Mr. Sims imply?

LIEUTENANT *takes off his shoulder holster, hangs it on the rack transferring the revolver to his hip-pocket* Just vague hints

MC LEOD You can write those on the air!

LIEUTENANT What've you got? *Takes off his shirt hangs it up*

MC LEOD Girl—Miss Harris in the hospital Critical I called the D.A.'s office I'm taking Schneider over to the hospital for a positive identification I've got a corroborating witness I phoned her She's on her way over here And I want to get a signed statement from Schneider

LIEUTENANT How?

MC LEOD Persuasion

JOE *saunters into the outer office*

LIEUTENANT Keep your big mitts off That's an order

MC LEOD Were you ever in those railroad flats of his? Did you ever see that kitchen table covered by a filthy bloodstained oilcloth on which Kurt Schneider performs his delicate operations?

LIEUTENANT *crosses to desk, opens drawer takes out shaving articles and towel* This is an impoisonal business! Your moral indignation is beginning to give me a quick pain in the butt You got a Messianic complex You want to be the judge and the jury too Well you can't do it It says so in the book I don't like lawyers coming in here with photos It marks my squad lousy I don't like it—and I won't have it You understand?

MC LEOD Yes sir

LIEUTENANT Can't you say yes sir, without making it sound like an insult? *Pause*

MC LEOD *the sting still in his voice* Yes, sir

LIEUTENANT *furiously* You're too damn superior that's your trouble For the record, I don't like you any more'n you like me, but you got a value here and I need you on my squad That's the only reason you're not wearing a white badge again

MC LEOD *reaches in his pocket for his shield* You wouldn't want it back now, would you?

LIEUTENANT When I do I'll ask for it

MC LEOD Because you can have it—with instructions

LIEUTENANT *controls himself* Get what you can out of Schneider but no roughhouse! You know the policy of this administration

MC LEOD I don't hold with it

LIEUTENANT What the hell ice does that cut?

MC LEOD I don't believe in coddling criminals

LIEUTENANT Who tells you to?

MC LEOD You do The whole damn system does

LIEUTENANT Sometimes, McLeod you talk like a maniac

MC LEOD *starts to speak* May I

LIEUTENANT No! You got your orders That's all

MC LEOD May I have the keys to the files sir?

LIEUTENANT You got to have the last word, don't you? *Tosses the keys on the desk stalks off right*

DAKIS *finishes finger printing* CHARLEY *waves him to the wash room* Charley wash up! In there!

JOE, *to* BRODY How many burglaries?

BRODY Nine or ten

*A tall slender girl enters and stands at the gate Her face is handsome with a bony freckled intelligent scrubbed handsomeness wide soft generous lips, huge clear eyes at the moment very troubled indeed*

JOE Any important names? Any good addresses?  
BRODY *moans* We don't know yet You'll get it  
Don't rush us will you Joey?

YOUNG GIRL Is Detective McLeod here?

10 CALLAHAN *crosses up to gate* Yes Miss?

YOUNG GIRL May I see Detective McLeod?

CALLAHAN He's busy Anything I can do for you?  
*He scrutinizes her grins a little on the make* I  
seen your face before?

YOUNG GIRL No

CALLAHAN I never forget a face

JOE *looks at her then wanders into the* LIEUTENANT'S office

YOUNG GIRL You probably saw my sister

20 CALLAHAN Who's your sister?

YOUNG GIRL Please tell him Miss Susan Carmichael is here

CALLAHAN Yes Miss Just a minute *Replaces the cards in the files*

MC LEOD *in the LIEUTENANT'S office examining burglary sheets still fuming at his* LIEUTENANT Ignorant gross ward-heeler! Why don't you print the truth for once Yussel?

JOE Which truth?—Yours his theirs, mine?

30 MC LEOD The truth

JOE Oh that one? Who would know it? If it came up and blew in your ear who would know it?

CALLAHAN, *pokes his head into the doorway addresses* MC LEOD Kid outside for you! *Returns to his files*

JOE A nice, tall, long stemmed kid *He sits down picks his teeth rambles on almost to himself* MC LEOD *who is going through the files and grinding his teeth in anger, pays no heed to* JOE'S reflections I love these tall kids today I got a nephew,  
40 17 six foot three, blond hair blue eyes *Sucks his teeth* Science tells us at the turn of the century the average man and woman's going to be seven-foot tall Seven foot! That's for me We know the next fifty years are gonna be lousy war, atom bombs whole friggin civilization's caving in But I don't wake up at four A.M. to bury myself any more I got the whole thing licked—I'm skipping the next fifty years I'm concentrating on the twenty first century and all those seven-foot beauties

50 MC LEOD, *impatiently* I've no time for a philosophic discussion today, Yussel *Starts for outer office*

JOE *following murmurs* Don't throw water on McLeod He goes rabid

BARNES *to CHARLEY as he comes out of wash*

room O.K., Chailey Come with me *They exit through gate*

MC LEOD *calls to* O'BRIEN *who is about to exit with LEWIS in tow* Hey, John I need eight or ten fellows up here for a line up Ask a couple of the men down stairs to get into civvies! 60

O'BRIEN Line up? Sure *Exit*

MC LEOD *coming down to the desk addresses the young lady at the gate* Miss Carmichael?

SUSAN Yes I'm Susan Carmichael

MC LEOD Come in please!

SUSAN *enters through the gate crosses down to the desk facing* MC LEOD Are you the officer who phoned? 70

MC LEOD Yes I'm Detective McLeod

SUSAN Where's Arthur? What happened to him? What's this about?

MC LEOD Did you contact your sister?

SUSAN *hesitating* N no!

MC LEOD Why not?

SUSAN I couldn't reach her

MC LEOD Where is she?

SUSAN Visiting some friends in Connecticut I don't know the address Where's Arthur? Is he all right? 80

MC LEOD Yes He's inside How well do you know Arthur Kindred?

SUSAN Very All my life We lived next door to each other in Ann Arbor

MC LEOD Kind of a wild boy wasn't he?

SUSAN Arthur? Not at all He was always very serious Why?

MC LEOD Did he give your sister any money?

SUSAN My sister earns \$25 an hour She's a very successful model She averages \$300 to \$400 a week for herself Will you please tell me what this is about? 90

MC LEOD Let me ask the questions? Do you mind?

SUSAN Sorry!

MC LEOD Arthur was in the Navy?

SUSAN Five years

MC LEOD He got a dishonorable discharge

SUSAN What are you talking about?

BRODY *becomes interested edges over listening* 100

MC LEOD That's a question

SUSAN You didn't punctuate it

MC LEOD Correction *He smiles* Did he?

SUSAN Arthur was cited four times He got the silver star He carried a sailor up three decks of a burning ship He had two ships sunk under him He floated around once in the Pacific Ocean for seven teen hours with sharks all around him When they picked him up he was out of his head trying to climb onto a concrete platform that wasn't there He was in the hospital for ten weeks after that Any more questions? 110

MC LEOD What is his relationship to your sister?

- SUSAN I told you we all grew up together  
MC LEOD Is he in love with her?  
SUSAN My sister is one of the most beautiful girls  
in New York A lot of men are in love with her May  
I talk to Arthur now please?  
MC LEOD He didn't give her any money then?  
SUSAN *impatiently* No  
MC LEOD Did he give it to you?  
SUSAN Are you kidding?  
10 MC LEOD I'm afraid not Your sister's boy friend is  
in trouble  
SUSAN What trouble?  
MC LEOD He's a thief  
SUSAN Who says so?  
MC LEOD He does  
SUSAN I don't believe you  
MC LEOD Sit down *He calls through door of the*  
LEUTENANT'S office off right Arthur! In here!  
ARTHUR *enters sees SUSAN stops in his tracks*  
20 SUSAN Jiggs! What happened?  
ARTHUR Suzy! *He glares indignantly at MC LEOD*  
Did you have to drag children into this?  
MC LEOD, *ironically* Now Jiggs!  
ARTHUR Susan, you shouldn't have come here  
SUSAN What happened?  
ARTHUR I took some money  
SUSAN Who from?  
ARTHUR The man I worked for  
SUSAN But why Jiggs why?  
30 ARTHUR None of your business  
BRODY *scanning a list* Say Jim!  
MC LEOD Yes?  
BRODY *beckons to him* MC LEOD *turns up talks*  
*to BRODY sotto voce* ARTHUR *whispers to SUSAN,*  
*urgently*  
ARTHUR Suzy, go home—quick—go home—get  
out of here  
SUSAN *whispers* Jiggs what happened? Have you  
got a lawyer?  
40 ARTHUR No!  
SUSAN I'll phone Joy and tell her  
ARTHUR Do you want to get her involved? There  
are newspapermen here You want to ruin her  
career?  
SUSAN, *whispering* But, Jiggs—  
ARTHUR *whispering* Get out of here will you?  
MC LEOD *returns*  
MC LEOD Well young lady—satisfied?  
SUSAN How much did he take?  
50 MC LEOD \$480  
ARTHUR What's the difference? Will you please  
tell her to go home Officer? She's only a kid  
SUSAN *indignantly* I'm not I wish you'd  
ARTHUR She shouldn't be here She's got nothing  
to do with this  
MC LEOD All right, young lady I'm sorry to have  
bothered you Have your sister get in touch with me  
as soon as you hear from her  
ARTHUR What for? Don't you do it Suzy—you  
don't have to To MC LEOD You're not going to get  
her involved in this  
MC LEOD You shut up! To SUSAN O.K. *Motions*  
SUSAN *to go* She bites her lip to keep from crying  
and goes  
BRODY *comes down to* ARTHUR Is it true that you  
carried a wounded sailor on your shoulders up three  
decks of a burning ship?  
ARTHUR Yes  
BRODY Pretty good  
ARTHUR Could I have that drink now? Please! 7  
BRODY Sure *Crosses up to his files takes out a*  
*bottle of whiskey cleans a glass pours a drink*  
MC LEOD *ambles down to* KURT *sipping coffee from*  
*a container*  
MC LEOD You're looking pretty well Kurt  
KURT Could be better  
MC LEOD, *sits at typewriter inserts a sheet of*  
*paper* How's the farm?  
KURT All right!  
MC LEOD Wasn't there a drought in Jersey this 8  
year? *Starts to type statement*  
KURT I irrigate my crops I've got plenty of water  
MC LEOD What do you raise?  
KURT Cabbage Lettuce Kale! Truck  
stuff!  
MC LEOD *typing* That's the life Picturesque coun-  
try North Jersey Nice hills unexpected!  
KURT Yes How're things with you?  
MC LEOD This is one business never has a depres- 9  
sion *Drinks—surveys his container* They make a  
pretty good cup of coffee across the street  
KURT Mm! So so  
BRODY, *comes down hands drink to* ARTHUR Here  
you are son! *Crosses up again to replace bottle in his*  
*file* ARTHUR *tosses down the drink*  
MC LEOD *types* When I retire I'm going to buy  
myself a little farm like yours, settle down Does it  
really pay for itself?  
KURT If you work it  
MC LEOD How much can a man average a year? 11  
*Types*  
KURT Varies Two thousand a good year  
MC LEOD Clear? That's pretty good *Types*  
KURT Sometimes you lose a crop  
MC LEOD *types* How long you had that farm?  
KURT Eleven years  
MC LEOD And you average two thousand a year?  
*Stops typing fixes him with a sharp searching glance*  
KURT What's ?  
MC LEOD Then how'd you manage to accumulate 11  
\$56 000 in the bank Kurt? Hm? *Silence* Hm Kurt?  
How?  
KURT Who says I have?

MC LEOD I do I checked \$56 000 That's a lot of  
 kale Takes out a note book from his pocket You  
 got it in four banks Passaic—Oakdale—two in  
 Newark Here are the figures How'd you get that  
 money Kurt?

KURT I got it honestly

MC LEOD How? How?

KURT I don't have to tell you that

MC LEOD Oh come on Kurt How? KURT shakes  
 10 his head Make it easy for yourself You're still run-  
 ning that abortion mill aren't you?

KURT My name is Kurt Schneider—I live in Oak  
 dale New Jersey That's all I have to answer

MC LEOD You operated on Miss Harris didn't  
 you?

KURT No, I did not!

MC LEOD She identified your picture He rips the  
 sheet of paper out of the typewriter and sets it down  
 before KURT Sign that Kurt!

20 KURT What is it?

MC LEOD An admission

KURT You think I'm crazy

MC LEOD We've got you dead to rights Make it  
 easy for yourself

KURT I'm not saying anything more on advice of  
 counsel!

MC LEOD I'm getting impatient! You better talk  
 Kurt

KURT I'm standing on my Constitutional rights!

MC LEOD, rising nervously moving above the desk  
 0 and down to KURT Hold your hats boys here we  
 go again Looking down on KURT from behind him  
 murmurs softly You're lucky Kurt You got away  
 with it once But the postman rings twice And this  
 time we've got you, Kurt Why don't you cop a  
 plea? Miss Harris is waiting for you We're going to  
 visit her in the hospital She's anxious to see you  
 And what you don't know is There was a cor-  
 roborating witness and she's downstairs ready to  
 40 identify you right now You're getting pale,  
 Kurt KURT laughs softly to himself What are you  
 laughing at?

KURT Nothing

MC LEOD That's right! That's just what you've got  
 to laugh about—nothing You're on the bottom of  
 this joke

KURT Maybe I am Maybe I'm not Maybe some-  
 body else is

MC LEOD What's that mean?

50 KURT I know why you're out to get me

MC LEOD Why? KURT shakes his head Why  
 Kurt? This is your last chance Do you want to talk?

KURT My name is Kurt Schneider I live in Oak-  
 dale New Jersey That's all I'm obliged to say by  
 law

MC LEOD You should have been a lawyer Kurt

A Philadelphia lawyer Crosses to the rail shouts  
 downstairs Line up Gus!

GUS off stage shouts up Coming He can be  
 head approaching singing the melody of The Rose 60  
 of Tralee

MC LEOD to DAKIS Nick put on your hat and coat  
 for a line up

BRODY crosses down to ARTHUR again ARTHUR  
 hands him the glass

ARTHUR Thanks

A pause As BRODY looks at the boy something of  
 agony creeps into his face

BRODY My boy was in the Navy, too The Juneau  
 Know her? 70

ARTHUR She was a cruiser

BRODY Yeah

ARTHUR Didn't she go down with all hands? In  
 the Pacific?

BRODY There were ten survivors He wasn't one  
 of them

ARTHUR Too bad

BRODY Yeah! He was my only boy It's something  
 you never get over You never believe it You keep  
 waiting for a bell to ring phone door 80  
 Sometimes I hear a voice on the street or see a  
 young fellow from the back the set of his shoulders  
 —like you—for a minute it's him Your whole life  
 becomes like a dream a walking dream

ARTHUR Maybe he was one of the lucky ones

BRODY Don't say that!

ARTHUR Why not?

BRODY Because it wouldn't make sense then

ARTHUR Does it?

BRODY fiercely Yes damn it! Yes 90

MC LEOD Say Lou! Will you put on your hat and  
 coat for a line-up?

Enter policemen in civilian clothes and detectives  
 putting on hats and coat joking and laughing

BRODY Yeah

MC LEOD John Nick hat and coat!

The men line up

DAKIS to CHARLEY Sit over there Charley In-  
 dicates the bench

MC LEOD coming down to KURT Kurt Put on your  
 hat and coat Pick your spot End middle any place 100  
 No alibis later KURT finds a place in the line and  
 stands there stiffly MC LEOD calls off Come in Miss  
 Hatch Enter MISS HATCH a hard looking young  
 woman with hair bleached a lemon yellow She wears  
 an elaborate fur stole How do you do Miss Hatch?

MISS HATCH I'm fine thank you Crosses down to  
 MC LEOD MC LEOD scrutinizes her frowns What's  
 the matter?

MC LEOD indicating the fur piece Rushing the 110  
 season aren't you?

MISS HATCH laughs nervously Oh!

MC LEOD New?

MISS HATCH Yes

MC LEOD Mink?

MISS HATCH Uh, uh! Dyed squirrel! Looks real though, doesn't it?

MC LEOD Mmm It was nice of you to come down and help us We appreciate that

MISS HATCH Don't mention it Let's just get it over with huh? I got an engagement What do I—  
10 *She looks about for an ash tray in which to deposit her cigarette*

MC LEOD Throw it on the floor *She obeys He steps on it* You have your instructions?

MISS HATCH Yeah I look at them all then touch the one on the shoulder *He nods She walks slowly down the line nervously scrutinizing the faces a little too quickly to be convincing She turns to*

MC LEOD He isn't here

MC LEOD You haven't looked

MISS HATCH I looked Of course I did

20 CALLAHAN It's the new look

MC LEOD Just look, will you Not at me Over there

MISS HATCH I don't recognize anyone I never saw any of them in my life before

MC LEOD You identified a picture of one of these men

MISS HATCH What are you trying to do make me give you a wrong identification? Well, I ain't gonna do it

30 MC LEOD  *rubs his thumb and forefinger together suggestively* Do you know what this means?

MISS HATCH, *sharply* Yeah That's your cut on the side

MC LEOD You're fresh! *Phone rings BRODY answers it*

BRODY 21 Squad Brody *Conversation sotto voce*

MC LEOD I've a good mind to prefer charges against you

MISS HATCH *screams at him* That's what I get for coming all the way downtown to help you You cops are all the same Give you a badge and you think you can push the world around

MC LEOD You identified one of these men Now point him out or I'm going to throw you in the clink

MISS HATCH You'll do *what?*

BRODY *hangs up the phone, calls him to one side*

BRODY Jim!

MC LEOD Yes?

50 BRODY *in subdued tones* That was the D A's office The Harris gul died

MC LEOD When?

BRODY A couple of hours ago

MC LEOD Why weren't we informed?

BRODY I don't know

MC LEOD There goes the case

BRODY The D A says just go through the motions

He can't get an indictment now Just book him and forget it he says

MC LEOD Sure forget it Let him fill the morgues! *Crosses over to KURT* Congratulations, Kurt! The gul died Sit down over there Kurt All right Miss Hatch You've earned your fur piece I hope you'll enjoy it

MISS HATCH *flaring* You can't talk to me that way I'm no tramp that you can talk to me that way Who the hell do you think you are anyway?

MC LEOD Get out! Take a couple of drop dead pills! Get lost!

MISS HATCH *exit murmuring* Big cheese! See my lawyer about him

MC LEOD All right men thank you

*As they go we hear snatches of the following conversation from the men*

GUS I was waiting for her to put the finger on you boy

DAKIS Me? Do I look like an ice-tong man?

O'BRIEN Regular Sarah Heartburn

CALLAHAN One minute more we'd have gotten the witches scene from *Macbeth* *Exit*

WILLIE *the janitor has entered during the above*  
WILLIE *sweeping vigorously muttering all the while* Now look at this joint will you? You filthy slob! You live in a stable To SHOPLIFTER Come on get up *She rises He sweeps right through her* Wouldn't think I swept it out an hour ago Boy I'd like to see the homes you bums live in Pig pens I bet *Exit*

MC LEOD *crosses up to the duty chart takes it off the wall crosses down to the desk with it* *murmuring for JOE's benefit* Why am I wasting my life here? I could make more driving a hack I like books, I like music I've got a wonderful, wonderful wife—I could get a dozen jobs would give me more time to enjoy the good things of life I should have my head examined All this work these hours! What for? It's a phony *He removes the letters spelling out GALLAGHER and DAKIS places them in the drawer takes out other letters inserts his name and BRODY's*

JOE, comes down Was she reached you think?

MC LEOD What do you think?

JOE I don't know

MC LEOD *groans* Oh Yussel

JOE I don't know

MC LEOD This is a phony The thieves and murderers could have written the penal code themselves Your democracy Yussel is a Rube Goldberg contraption An elaborate machine a block long—you set it all in motion, 3,000 wheels turn it goes PING *He crosses up again replaces the chart on the wall*

JOE That's what's great about it That's what I love It's so confused it's wonderful *Crosses to*  
MC LEOD After all, Seamus, guilt and innocence!—The epistemological question! Just the knowing



the mere knowing the ability to ken Maybe he didn't do it Maybe she can't identify him How do you know?

BRODY *enters sits at desk*

MC LEOD How do you know anything? You've got a nose you can smell you've got taste buds you can taste you've got nerve endings you can feel and theoretically you've got intelligence you can judge

10 JOE Ah, ha! That's where it breaks down!

MC LEOD TO BRODY Got an aspirin?

BRODY *hands him a box of aspirin* MC LEOD *takes the box and crosses over into the* LIEUTENANT'S *office* JOE *follows him*

JOE I was talking to Judge Mendez today He just got on the bench last year Seamus Twenty-nine years a successful lawyer He thought this would be a cinch He's lost forty pounds He's nervous as a cat His wife thinks he has a mistress He has —  
20 The Law He said to me, Joe! I've got to sentence a man to death tomorrow How can I do it? Who am I to judge? It takes a God to know!—To really know!

MC LEOD *in LIEUTENANT'S office draws a glass of water, tosses the aspirin into his mouth* Bunk!

JOE I'm quoting Judge Mendez

MC LEOD Then he's a corrupt man, himself All lawyers are anyway I say hang all the lawyers, and let justice triumph *Washes down the aspirin with a drink, sits takes off his tie rolls up his sleeve then slowly with mounting bitterness* Evil has a stench of its own A child can spot it I know I know Yussel My own father was one of them No good he was possessed Every day and every night of my childhood I saw and heard him abuse and maliciously torment my mother I saw that sadistic son of a bitch of a father of mine with that criminal mind of his drive my mother straight into a lunatic asylum She died in a lunatic asylum He controls himself Yes I know it when I smell it I learned it early and deep I was fourteen and alone in the world I made war on it Every time I look at one of these babies I see my father's face!  
40

*Phone rings in the outer office* BRODY *answers*

BRODY 21 Squad Brody *Pause* Lock the door Don't let him out! I'll be right over *Hangs up, rushes into the inner office, grabs his hat and coat* Say Jim, there's a guy at O'Donovan's bar with a badge and gun, arresting a woman Claims he's a cop  
50 Might be, might be a shakedown I'll be right back Catch the phone for me! *Takes his gun out of the drawer and runs off*

JOE, *runs after him* Could be some shooting Wait for me, baby! *Exit*

MC LEOD *comes out of LIEUTENANT'S office his face grim, black, the veins in his temple standing out*

MC LEOD, to KURT You're a lucky man Kurt

Kissed in your cradle by a vulture So the girl died Kurt

KURT That's too bad

MC LEOD What have you got Kurt in place of a conscience? KURT *starts to speak* Don't answer!—I know—a lawyer I ought to fall on you like the sword of God

KURT That sword's got two edges You could cut your own throat

MC LEOD *takes out a cigarette turns away to light it, his face twitching neurotically* Look! The gates open While I'm lighting my cigarette—why don't you run for it? One second you'll be out in the street  
70

KURT I'll go free anyway Why should I run?

MC LEOD Give me the little pleasure—(*touching his gun*) of putting a hole in the back of your head

KURT You wouldn't do that Talk!

MC LEOD Is it?

KURT You're an intelligent man You're not foolish

MC LEOD Try me Kurt Why don't you? Go ahead dance down that hall!

KURT *smiles and shakes his head* Soon as you book me I'm out on bail When I go to trial they couldn't convict me in a million years You know that Even if I were guilty which I'm not The girl is dead There are no witnesses That's the law  
80

MC LEOD You've been well briefed You know your catechism

KURT I know more than my catechism!

MC LEOD What, for example? KURT *smiles and nods* What Kurt? What goes on under that monkey-skull of yours I wonder! KURT *is silent* On your feet! KURT *looks up at MC LEOD'S face is frightened by its almost insane intensity* MC LEOD *roars at him* Get up!  
90

KURT *rises* Go in there! *Points to the* LIEUTENANT'S *office* KURT *goes into the* LIEUTENANT'S *office* MC LEOD *follows him shuts the door* Sit down Kurt KURT *sits* I'm going to give you a piece of advice When the courts and the juries and the judges let you free this time, get out of New York Go to Georgia They won't extradite criminals to us So you see Kurt, take my advice go to Georgia or go to hell but you butcher one more girl in this city and law or no law I'll find you and I'll put a bullet in the back of your head, and I'll drop your body in the East River, and I'll go home and I'll sleep sweetly  
100

KURT You have to answer to the law the same as I You don't frighten me Now I'll give you some advice I've got plenty on you too I know why you're so vindictive And you watch your step! Because I happen to have friends too, downtown with pull lots of pull!  
110

MC LEOD Have you? What do you know? Aren't you the big shot! *Pull!* Have you got any friends

with *push!* Like *that!* Kicks him, KURT goes over, chair and all

KURT Cut that out! You let me alone now  
MC LEOD *grabs him by the lapels pulls him to his feet* You let me go! Let me go!

MC LEOD No Kurt! Everybody else is going to let you go You got it all figured exactly The courts the juries the judges— *He slaps him* Every body except me *He slaps him again* KURT starts to resist *growls and tries to push MC LEOD away* MC LEOD *hits him in the belly* KURT *crumples to the floor* MC LEOD's rage subsides *He sighs disgusted with himself for losing his temper* Why didn't you obey your lawyer and keep your mouth shut? All right! Get up Kurt! Come on! Get up!

KURT *moaning and writhing* I can't I can't  
Something inside broke! *He calls feebly* Help! *He screams* Help!

MC LEOD Get up! You're all right Get up!  
KURT's eyes roll up *exposing the whites*  
LIEUTENANT MONOGHAN *enters quickly, wiping shaving lather off his face with a towel*  
LIEUTENANT What's going on? *He sees KURT goes to him bends down*

KURT Inside! It broke He hurt me  
DAKIS *rushes in*

LIEUTENANT Take it easy son you'll be all right

KURT I feel terrible

LIEUTENANT Nick! Quick! Get in ambulance

DAKIS Yes sir *Goes to the phone puts in a call*

LIEUTENANT Did he resist you?

GALLAGHER *enters on the double*

MC LEOD No

LIEUTENANT No? You lunatic! Didn't I just get through warning you *To KURT who is on the floor, moaning in agony* What happened?

KURT, *gasping for breath* He tried to kill me!

LIEUTENANT Why should he do that?

KURT Tamí Giacoppetti! Same thing!

She got him after me too Tamí Giacoppetti

KURT's mouth opens and closes with scarcely any further sound emerging

LIEUTENANT What? Tamí Giacoppetti? Who's he? What about him? *Puts his ear to KURT's mouth* A little louder! Just try and talk a little louder lad  
KURT's eyes close his head falls back *To GALLAGHER* Wet some towels! *GALLAGHER rushes to the wash room* DAKIS *loosens KURT's collar tries to restore him to consciousness* The LIEUTENANT rises *confronts MC LEOD glaring at him* Who's Tamí Giacoppetti?

MC LEOD I've no idea

LIEUTENANT What's the pitch here McLeod?

MC LEOD He needled me He got fresh He begged for it and I let him have it That's all

GALLAGHER *returns with several wet towels* DAKIS *takes them from him applies them to KURT's head*

LIEUTENANT Don't con me! That ain't all Come on! Let's have it! What about this Tamí Giacoppetti?

MC LEOD I never heard of him

GALLAGHER Giacoppetti? I know him A black market guy Runs a creep joint in the village

KURT *groans*

MC LEOD He's putting on an act Lieutenant Can't you see

KURT *groans*

LIEUTENANT This could be a very hot potato If this man's hurt the big brass'll be down here throwin' questions at me And I'm going to have the answers What plays between you two guys? What's he got on you? What's the clout?

MC LEOD Nothing

LIEUTENANT Then what was his mouthpiece yellin' and screamin' about?

MC LEOD Red herring Red red herring!

LIEUTENANT That I'm gonna god-damn well find out for myself There's something kinky about this McLeod if you're concealing something from me I'll have your head on a plate *To GALLAGHER* This Giacoppetti! Find him and bring him in!

GALLAGHER Yes sir *Goes*

LIEUTENANT, *calls after him* My car's downstairs Use it

GALLAGHER Yes sir

The LIEUTENANT *bends down to KURT* MC LEOD *grim faced lights another cigarette*

CURTAIN

## ACT TWO

SCENE The scene is the same, fifty four minutes later by the clock on the wall

AT RISE The lawyer ENDICOTT SIMS is closeted in the LIEUTENANT'S office scolding the LIEUTENANT and MC LEOD In the squad room the SHOPLIFTER is reading the comics ARTHUR is seated quietly his head bowed in thought DAKIS the JANITOR and GUS are in a huddle whispering glancing over toward the LIEUTENANT'S door BRODY is talking sotto voce to an excited man and woman who are glaring at a tough looking specimen The setting sun is throwing long and ominous shadows into the darkening room

SIMS fulminating at MC LEOD who pointedly ignores him by focusing attention on a hangnail How dare you take the law in your own hands? Who are you to constitute yourself a court of last appeal?

LIEUTENANT, *oil on the surging waters* Nah Counselor

The phone rings in the squad-room BRODY crosses to answer

BRODY 21st Squad Detective Brody Yeah!

The Hospital! Yeah How is he? *Jotting notation*

SIMS No Lieutenant! This is a felony *Wheels back to MC LEOD* I'm going to press a felonious assault here So help me I'm going to see you in jail!

MC LEOD, *calmly biting the hangnail* On which side of the bars, Counselor?

SIMS Be careful I'm an attorney and an officer of the court and I don't like that talk

MC LEOD I'm an officer of the peace and I don't like collusion

10 SIMS What do you mean by that?

MC LEOD, *looks up sharply* By that I mean *collusion* Subornation of witnesses Counselor

SIMS What the devil are you talking about?

MC LEOD I'm charging you with subornation

SIMS Your lips are blistering with lies

MC LEOD *sardonically* Praise from an expert I had a witness here today you bought off Counselor

SIMS That's so absurd, I'm not even going to answer it

20 MC LEOD I'll prove it!

LIEUTENANT All right! Cut it! Cut it out Enough's enough

SIMS to LIEUTENANT I intend to carry this to the Commissioner

LIEUTENANT *pushes the phone across the desk toward SIMS* Call him now That's your privilege

SIMS And don't think *you're* entirely free of blame in this Lieutenant

LIEUTENANT Me? What have I

30 SIMS I warned you personal motives are involved in this case I was afraid this was going to happen You should have taken the necessary steps to prevent it Luckily I came armed with photos and affidavits

LIEUTENANT Mystery! Mystery! *What motives?*

MC LEOD *rises* Yes Why don't you tell us? Let's get it out in the open! What are these motives?

SIMS It is not to my client's interests to reveal them at this moment

MC LEOD Legal bull

40 LIEUTENANT I'm beginning to think so myself

SIMS Sure One hand washes the other

BRODY *knocks at the door*

LIEUTENANT Come in!

BRODY Phone Lieutenant

LIEUTENANT *picks up the phone* 21st Squad Lieutenant Monaghan Yeah Yeah

BRODY *returns to the squad room, hangs up the phone*

50 SIMS *softly, to MC LEOD* On what evidence do you make these serious charges?

MC LEOD *taunting him* The evidence of my intelligent observation

SIMS Insufficient incompetent and irrelevant

LIEUTENANT *looks up, annoyed* Sh! Sh! *Turns back to the phone*

SIMS You're pretty cagey McLeod but your tactics don't fool me for a second You're not going to

duck out of this so easily You're in a position of responsibility here and you have to answer for your actions You can't use your badge for personal vengeance That doesn't go The public isn't your servant you're theirs You're going to be broken for this 60

MC LEOD *roaring back at him* Go ahead! Break me! You're worse than the criminals you represent Counselor You're so damn respectable Yet, look at you! The clothes you wear your car downstairs your house in Westchester all bought with stolen money tainted with blood

LIEUTENANT Shut up! I got the hospital 70

SIMS How is he? *They listen attentively*

LIEUTENANT *on phone* Yes Yes I see Keep in touch with me Let me know right away *Hangs up* See Counselor it always pays to wait the event There are no external lacerations on your client that would warrant a felony assault They're now making X rays and tests to see if there are any internal injuries So far you haven't got a leg to stand on

MC LEOD Let him let him! *To SIMS* Bring your felony charge It'll give me a chance to get your client on the stand and really tear his clothes off 80 And yours too Counselor

LIEUTENANT McLeod! Step outside!

MC LEOD *crosses out of the LIEUTENANT's office shuts the door*

BRODY *murmurs to MC LEOD* What's the score?

MC LEOD Tempest in a teapot *Turns to his personal file*

SIMS What kind of an officer is that?

LIEUTENANT Detectives are like finger prints No two alike He has his quirks 90

SIMS The understatement of the year

LIEUTENANT We all got 'em He has a value here He's honest He ain't on the take I stand up for him on that Got no tin boxes

SIMS I wasn't saying he had

LIEUTENANT I thought you was maybe

SIMS No

LIEUTENANT Then what was you saying? I guess I fumbled it 100

SIMS I can't discuss it with you

LIEUTENANT *sarcastically* I'd love to discuss it with someone Who do you suggest?

SIMS McLeod

LIEUTENANT Nah Counselor!

SIMS Or his wife!

LIEUTENANT, *looks up sharply* His wife? What do you mean by that?

SIMS Never mind! Skip it!

LIEUTENANT You mentioned his wife What do you mean by that? Look! I got to get a clear up here A little co operation would go a long way 110

SIMS When it serves my client's interests not before

LIEUTENANT Four years ago I threw my radio set the hell outa the window You know why? Because, goddamn it I hate mysteries

SIMS, *smiles shakes his head* Lieutenant I'm not free to discuss this yet *Looks at his watch* Gouv-  
eigneur Hospital?

LIEUTENANT Yeah

SIMS I want to see my client Will I be allowed in?

10 LIEUTENANT Yeah yeah

SIMS I'll be back *He leaves the* LIEUTENANT'S office *In the squad-room he pauses to confront* MC LEOD I'll be back I'm not through with you

MC LEOD I can't wait

*Exit* SIMS

BRODY *to* MC LEOD, *indicating the tough surly looking character* This creep was impersonating an officer

20 WOMAN I didn't know I thought he might be a policeman His badge looked real

BRODY A shake-down After he got you outside he'd taken all your money and let you go You see, Mrs Feeney that's how we get a bad reputation Now you will appear in court in the morning won't you?

MRS FEENEY Oh yes

MR FEENEY Tomorrow morning? Hey! I've got a job

30 MRS FEENEY You'll explain to your boss You'll just take off, that's all

MR FEENEY But Isabel

MRS FEENEY Hell be there Don't you worry Thank you Thank you *They go off arguing*

BRODY, *to* MC LEOD I'm going down to book this crumb bum

CRUMB BUM *aggressively* What did you call me?

BRODY A crumb bum Come on! *Exit* BRODY *and the glowering CRUMB BUM*

40 *Inside the* LIEUTENANT *squints at his cigar a moment rises bellows*

LIEUTENANT McLeod!

MC LEOD *crosses to the* LIEUTENANT'S door, *opens it* Yes sir?

LIEUTENANT What the hell is this about? What's he driving at? I want the truth

MC LEOD Lieutenant, I give you my solemn word of honor

LIEUTENANT *pauses, studies him sighs waves him out* Shut the door!

50 MC LEOD *shuts the door and crosses to the desk* A sad looking man appears at the gate

MC LEOD Yes sir? What can I do for you?

MAN I want to report someone picked my pocket

MC LEOD, *sitting at the desk* Come in!

MAN, *exposes his back side revealing a patch cut out of his trousers* Look! They cut it right out

MC LEOD They work that way with a razor blade Sit down! Did you see the man?

MAN No First I knew I was in a restaurant *Sits down* I ate a big meal reached in my pocket to pay the check Boy I almost dropped dead I'm lucky I'm not here under arrest myself

MC LEOD *smiles* Yes What's your name?

MAN Gallantz D David

MC LEOD Address?

WILLY *pail in one hand, broom in the other taps* GALLANTZ *on the shoulder with the broom* Git up! GALLANTZ *rises staring at* WILLY 419 West 80th Street

WILLY, *bends down to the basket under the desk empties the contents into his pail, muttering under his breath rises heavily paying no attention to any one as he crosses off* Look at this room, will you? Wouldn't think I cleaned up an hour ago! Detectives! The brains of the department? Ha! Couldn't find a Chinaman on Mott Street *Exit*

MC LEOD What did you lose?

GALLANTZ My wallet

MC LEOD *writing* Can you describe it?

GALLANTZ Black leather

MC LEOD *picks up the phone* Lost property McLeod

SHOPLIFTER *lays down the newspaper, addresses* DAKIS Have you got one of them two way radio wrist watches like Dick Tracy?

DAKIS No

SHOPLIFTER Behind the times ain't you?

DAKIS Yeah behind the behind

SHOPLIFTER, *feels her pulse* Gee I think I'm getting a reaction Emotions are bad for me I got diabetes I'm not supposed to get emotions

DAKIS *belches then, indignantly* I got ulcers—I'm not supposed to eat sandwiches A hot meal was waiting for me at home Do me a favor!—Next time get yourself arrested before four o'clock Let a fellow eat a home cooked meal

SHOPLIFTER *genuinely contrite* I'm sorry

DAKIS Do you realize this is on my own time? *With mounting anger* Look at all these forms I had to type up And when we get to court what'll happen? The judge'll probably let you off I won't even get a conviction You cause me all this work for nothing

SHOPLIFTER I'm sorry

DAKIS That's a big help

*In his office the* LIEUTENANT *fishes an address book out of his desk drawer thumbs through it for a number reaches for the phone dials*

MC LEOD *hangs up* *To* GALLANTZ Sorry Nothing yet We'll follow it up If we hear anything, we'll let you know

GALLANTZ Thanks! *As he goes, he looks mourn*

*fully at his exposed derriere* My best pants, too  
Exit

LIEUTENANT *on the phone* Hello Mrs McLeod?  
This is Lieutenant Monaghan of the 21st No, no!  
He's all right Nothing like that!

*The rest of his conversation is drowned out by the entrance of CALLAHAN POLICEMAN BARNES BRODY and CHARLEY the burglar, all talking at once CALLAHAN and BARNES are carrying two suitcases and several pillowcases filled with loot from CHARLEY'S apartment BRODY completes the parade, carrying more loot CALLAHAN knocks at the LIEUTENANT'S door*

LIEUTENANT Come in!

CALLAHAN, *opens the LIEUTENANT'S door holds up the loot* Look what we found boss And by a strange coincidence—in Charley's apartment

*The LIEUTENANT covers the phone nods approval BARNES, unlocks CHARLEY'S handcuffs Sit down!*  
There!

CHARLEY *sits in the designated chair*

CALLAHAN O'Brien is taking Lewis around to identify the houses

LIEUTENANT Good! *Waves him out* Shut the door!

CALLAHAN *slams the door with his knee then aided by MC LEOD and BRODY and DAKIS he begins unloading the stolen goods*

CALLAHAN *holding up some loot* Look at this!  
These jockeys sure get around! *The LIEUTENANT picks up his phone and continues his conversation which is drowned out by the racket in the squad room as the men proceed to lay out and examine the stolen goods CALLAHAN holds up an expensive clock shakes it* This worth anything?

MC LEOD *examines it* Very good piece—Tiffany  
Where'd you get this Charley?

CHARLEY I bought it

MC LEOD Where?

CHARLEY Outside the jewelry exchange On the street

MC LEOD Who from?

CHARLEY Some guy—

MC LEOD What's his name?

CHARLEY I don't know I never saw him again

MC LEOD Or before?

CHARLEY, *nods* Yeah

MC LEOD Or at all The little man that wasn't there

SHOPLIFTER *feeling her pulse* I am getting a reaction Emotions are bad for me

DAKIS, *checking a stolen article against a list* Girls with diabetes shouldn't steal pink panties

SHOPLIFTER It wasn't pink pants

DAKIS, *sighs* I know

SHOPLIFTER It was a bag

DAKIS, *closes his eyes sighs* I know

SHOPLIFTER Alligator!

DAKIS I know

SHOPLIFTER Imitation alligator

DAKIS *sorry he started it all* I know

BRODY *holds up a piece of jewelry* This any good?

MC LEOD *examines it* Junk! Wait! Here's some thing! Monogrammed J G Checks with list Sure This is some of the Gordon stuff Where'd you get this Charley?

CHARLEY, *hangs his head disgusted* I ain't talking

BRODY Where?

CHARLEY *shakes his head*

CALLAHAN Where'd you get it Charley? *Takes out a billy* Know what this is? A persuader Bango it on the desk

CHARLEY Go ahead! Beat me! Beat me unconscious Go ahead!

*The janitor enters*

CALLAHAN *laughs puts the persuader away* You're too eager Charley Some a them creeps like it you know Gives em a thrill Look at that kisser! I'm a son of a bitch I'm right

BRODY *holding up a piece of silver* Where'd you get this Charley?

CHARLEY *hangs his head*

DAKIS, *annoyed walks over to him* Why don't you be professional Charley He's talking to you

What's the matter? What are you hanging your head for? What are you ashamed of? Nobody made you be a buglar You wanted to be a buglar—you're a buglar So be a good one! Be proud of your chosen profession! Hold your head up DAKIS *lifts CHARLEY'S head up by the chin* That's better You're a good thief Charley You're no bum They wear sweaters Not you!—You got a hundred dollar suit on You Wait a minute! *Opens CHARLEY'S coat looks at label* Take it off you bum Stolen! The name's still in it Where'd you get it?

CHARLEY *takes off the coat talking fast* You mean it's stolen? O K O K I'll tell you the whole story may I drop dead on this spot

CALLAHAN On this one? Be careful Charley

CHARLEY, *faster and faster, the nervous hands weaving in the air* Honest! The truth! But don't tell Lewis!—He'll kill me He makes out like he's a dummy don't he? He ain't He's smart Ooh he's as smart as they come Look I just been in New York two weeks I came here from Pittsburgh two weeks ago So help me I lost my valise in the station I meet this guy Lewis in a poolroom

CALLAHAN Where? What poolroom?

CHARLEY 14th Street corner of 7th Avenue Look it up! Check it! I'm telling you the truth, so

help me I shoot a game of pool with him He says to me You got a place to stay? I says No He says Share my flat I say O K My suits all dirty He lends me this one Says it belongs to his brother whos in Florida *Pause He looks up at the unbelieving faces circling him smiles feebly* So help me

CALLAHAN Charley my boy—I could tell you a story would bring tears to your eyes Get in there and take off your pants! *He pushes CHARLEY into the wash room*

BRODY Willy! Got an old pair of pants?

WILLY Yeah I got some downstairs! *Exit*

BRODY Not even smart enough to take out the label The names still in it Jerome Armstrong

CALLAHAN, *examining his list* Wait! I got that squeal right here I think there was a rape connected with this one

BRODY I wouldn't be surprised *Leaves the door of the toilet for a second Goes to the desk picks up the lists*

LIEUTENANT *calls* Dakis!

DAKIS *hurries to the* LIEUTENANT'S door, *opens it*

DAKIS Yes sir?

LIEUTENANT *beckons him in then softly* Wait downstairs for Mrs McLeod When she gets here let me know foist

DAKIS *startled murmurs* Right Chief

LIEUTENANT And a Nick *Touches his lips* Button em up

DAKIS Yes sir

*As he crosses to the gate he glances at MC LEOD his forehead furrows Exit The LIEUTENANT studies his cigar, frowns goes off Through the little window we see CHARLEY throw up the bathroom shade and tug at the won grill-work MC LEOD crosses to the wash room door calls in*

MC LEOD The only way you can get out of there Charley, is to jump down the toilet and pull the chain

JOE FEINSON *comes in tense and disturbed He glances at MC LEOD curiously, comes over to BRODY*

JOE Lot of loot They do the Zaza robbery?

BRODY, *calls in to CHARLEY* You robbed that Zaza dame's flat Charley?

CHARLEY *calls out* I don't know nuttin!

BRODY He don't know from nuttin!

CALLAHAN He's ignorant and he's proud of it

JOE Any good names?

BRODY Don't know yet—

JOE Any good addresses?

BRODY They're taking the other bum around He's identifying the houses We'll crack it in an hour

JOE *saunters over to MC LEOD* What's with Kurt Schneider?

MC LEOD No story

JOE He left here twenty five minutes ago in an ambulance What happened? He trip?

MC LEOD Yes

JOE Over his schnozzola?

MC LEOD Could have It's long enough

JOE No story?

MC LEOD No

JOE His lawyer's sore as a boil What happened?

MC LEOD You tell me You always have the story in your pocket

JOE Look Seamus! There are angles here I don't feel happy about

MC LEOD What angles?

JOE I don't know yet Come! Give! Off the record

MC LEOD You can print it if you want to Kurt Schneider was a butcher who murdered two girls and got away with it High time somebody put the fear of God in him The law wouldn't so I did Print it Yussel Go ahead You don't like cops Here's your chance

JOE I don't like cops? For a smart guy Seamus you can be an awful schmoe If I got fired tomorrow you'd still find me here hanging around running errands for you guys happy as a bird dog! I'm a buff from way back I found a home You know that

MC LEOD Sentimental slop Yussel

*A short stout timid man enters and looks about apprehensively*

JOE My sixth sense is still bothering me Seamus

MC LEOD Have a doctor examine it *To the new comer* Yes sir? *The nervous man looks about moistens his lips with his tongue mops his brow starts to speak MC LEOD recognizes him* Oh! Come in Mr Pritchett We've been waiting for you

MR PRITCHETT Did you get my money back?

MC LEOD I'm afraid not

MR PRITCHETT What'd he do with it?

MC LEOD Women and plush saloons

MR PRITCHETT Cabarets? I wouldn't have thought it He seemed such an honest boy I don't make many mistakes I'm a pretty good student of human nature usually

MC LEOD You'll be in court tomorrow morning?

MR PRITCHETT Oh, yes

MC LEOD We can count on you?

MR PRITCHETT When I make my mind up, I'm like iron

MC LEOD Fine! Thank you Mr Pritchett

MR PRITCHETT Like iron

MC LEOD Arthur on your feet! ARTHUR *rises* Is this the boy?

MR PRITCHETT *with a huge sigh* I'm afraid it is

MC LEOD Arthur, over here ARTHUR *crosses to them The phone rings MC LEOD goes to the desk picks up the receiver* 21st Squad! McLeod!

BARNES *at the wash room door* All right Charley

*He leads CHARLEY back into the squad room CHARLEY is now wearing an ill fitting torn and filthy pair of trousers at which the eloquent hands pantomime disgust*

MR PRITCHETT Well, Arthur is this your journey's end?

ARTHUR I guess so

MR PRITCHETT Did I treat you badly?

ARTHUR No Mr Pritchett

MR PRITCHETT Did I pay you a decent salary?

ARTHUR Yes

MR PRITCHETT Then why did you do this to me?

SUSAN *appears at the gate*

SUSAN *catches MC LEOD's eyes* May I? *He nods*  
*She enters, fumbling in her purse*

MR PRITCHETT to ARTHUR You spent my money on fast women?

ARTHUR Just a second

MR PRITCHETT No! I didn't grow my money on trees I built up my business from a hole in the wall where I sold neckties two for a quarter Thirty years I built it By the sweat of my brow I worked darn hard for it I want my money back

SUSAN And you'll get it I promise you *She takes some money out of her purse* The bank was closed All I could scrape together tonight was \$120 *She hands the money to MR PRITCHETT* I'll have the rest for you tomorrow

ARTHUR Susan! Take that back!

SUSAN Let me alone! Don't interfere Jiggs!

MR PRITCHETT Who is this? Who are you Miss?

SUSAN I'm an old friend of Mr Kindred's family And I'd like to straighten this out with you Mister What is your name?

MR PRITCHETT Pritchett, Albert J Pritchett

SUSAN Mr Pritchett How do you do? I'm Susan Carmichael

MR PRITCHETT How do you do? You say you're prepared to return the rest of my money young lady?

SUSAN Yes I'll sign a promissory note on whatever you suggest

MC LEOD *into the phone* One second! To SUSAN Where'd you get that cash Miss Carmichael?

SUSAN I had some and I pawned some jewelry Here are the tickets Do you want to see them?

MC LEOD If you don't mind *Takes them examines them* Anything of your sister's here?

SUSAN Nothing Not a bobby pin

MR PRITCHETT Is this the young lady who

ARTHUR No She doesn't know anything about it

SUSAN I know all there is to know To MR PRITCHETT Mr Pritchett this whole mess you can blame on my sister

ARTHUR What's the matter with you, Suzy? What are you dragging Joy into this for? She's got nothing to do with it

SUSAN Hasn't she?

ARTHUR No

SUSAN I've got news for you I just spoke to her 60  
on the phone *Pause*

ARTHUR You didn't tell her?

SUSAN Of course I did

ARTHUR What'd she say?

SUSAN She was upset

ARTHUR Naturally she would be You shouldn't have

SUSAN Naturally! My blue-eyed sister was in a tizzy because she didn't want to get involved in your troubles You know where I called her? At Walter Forbes in Connecticut She's afraid this might crimp her chances to be the next Mrs Forbes Big deal! 70

ARTHUR I know Suzy That's not news to me I know

SUSAN Till ten minutes ago I thought my sister was the cherub of the world There wasn't anything I wouldn't have done for her But if she can do this to you—to you Jiggs—then I don't want any part of her And I mean that I'm through with her I loathe her 80

ARTHUR Suzy! Take it easy

SUSAN All my life everything I wanted Joy got All right! I didn't mind I felt she was so special She was entitled to be Queen But now I'm through

ARTHUR Suzy maybe you don't understand Like everybody else Joy is frightened She wants to grab a little security Don't blame her for it I don't

SUSAN Security? You've seen Walter Forbes He's had four wives He gets falling down drunk every single night of his life Some security! 90

ARTHUR He's very rich You can't have everything

SUSAN Jiggs! Don't! Don't you be disgusting, too To MR PRITCHETT Should I make out a note for the rest?

MC LEOD Wait a minute *He hangs up the phone, crosses to MR PRITCHETT takes the money from him and hands it back to SUSAN* We don't run a collection agency here! This man is a thief We're here to prosecute criminals not collect money 100

*Detective DAKIS enters crosses into the LIEUTENANT's office*

SUSAN He's not a criminal

MC LEOD Miss Carmichael, you seem like a very nice young lady I'm going to give you some advice I've seen a thousand like him *He's no good!* Take your money and run

DAKIS to the LIEUTENANT She's downstairs

LIEUTENANT, *grunts rises goes to the door, calls McLeod!* 110

MC LEOD Yes sir?

LIEUTENANT Get me the old files on that Cottsworth squeal!

MC LEOD *thinks* 1938?



LIEUTENANT Yeah

MC LEOD March 12th LIEUTENANT *nods*  
That'll be buried under a pile inside I'll have to dig  
them up

LIEUTENANT Dig 'em up! Do it now!

MC LEOD Yes sir *As he crosses off left he throws  
his judgment at ARTHUR and SUSAN* He spells one  
thing for you—*miserly* the rest of your life He's no  
good Believe me I know! *Exit*

10 SUSAN *indignantly* That isn't true! To MR  
PRITCHETT That isn't true I've known Arthur all my  
life He never did anything before that was dishonor  
able He was the most respected boy in Ann Arbor  
*The LIEUTENANT nods to DAKIS who goes off to  
bring up MRS MC LEOD BRODY crosses down listen  
ing to SUSAN and MR PRITCHETT*

MR PRITCHETT Little lady, once I saw a picture  
*Less Miserables*—A dandy! That was before your  
time This Gene Valjeane—his sister's nine children  
20 are starving He steals a loaf of bread He goes to  
jail for—I don't know—twenty years I'm on Gene  
Valjeane's side there Impressed me very much I  
gave a little talk on it at my lodge But this?  
I don't go along with He wasn't starving He had a  
good job He went cabaretting with my money  
Heck, I don't go to them myself!

BRODY Mr Pritchett maybe once a year we get  
someone in here steals because he's actually hungry  
And were all on his side I'd do the same wouldn't  
30 you?

MR PRITCHETT Absolutely I always say self-  
preservation is the first law of nature

BRODY But that's one in a thousand cases

MR PRITCHETT Exactly my point! And what did  
he do it for?

ARTHUR *softly* I did it because I was hungry

MR PRITCHETT What?

ARTHUR Hungry You can be hungry for other  
things besides bread You've been decent to me, Mr  
40 Pritchett You trusted me and I let you down I'm  
sorry It's hard to explain even to myself I'd  
been separated from my girl for five years—five  
long bloody years! The one human being in the  
world I loved She's very beautiful Mr Pritchett  
Tall a silvery blonde girl, warm understanding

SUSAN Jiggs don't!

ARTHUR At least she was She was Susan We all  
change When I came back from the war I tried  
going back to school but I couldn't get settled I  
50 came to New York just to be near her She'd moved  
on into a new world She was out of my reach I  
should have accepted that I couldn't To take her  
out to dinner and hold her hand cost a month's  
salary I hung on anyway Last Wednesday I had to  
face it I was going to lose my girl She told me she  
wanted to marry someone else I made a final grand  
stand play for her Late collections had come in

Your money was in my pocket I blew the works on  
her I didn't give a damn about anything except  
holding on to her It was my last chance I lost  
60 anyway

BRODY You admit you did wrong?

ARTHUR Yes God yes!

BRODY You're willing to make restitution?

ARTHUR If I get the chance

SUSAN Tomorrow morning I promise you!

BRODY That's in his favor How do you feel Mr  
Pritchett?

MR PRITCHETT Well

BRODY This kid has a fine war record, too re  
member 70

MR PRITCHETT I know

BRODY He took a lot of chances for us Maybe we  
ought to take one for him You see these kids today  
got problems nobody ever had We don't even  
understand them New blood We're varicosed If a  
new world is gonna be made outa this mess looks  
like they're the ones gotta do it

MR PRITCHETT It's funny you should say that I  
was talking to my brother in law only the other night  
80 about my nephew and I made exactly that point I  
was saying to him

BRODY Mr Pritchett do you mind stepping over  
here a minute?

MR PRITCHETT Not at all! *Rises follows him*

BRODY You, too Miss!

SUSAN *follows BRODY off left*

CHARLEY *stamps his foot* Give me another ciga  
1 ette

BARNES What do you do? Eat these things? 90

CHARLEY Give me a cigarette!

BARNES *gives him another cigarette*

DAKIS *enters leading MRS MC LEOD to the LIEU  
TENANT'S office* MARY MC LEOD is a pretty young  
woman with blonde hair big gray troubled eyes a  
sweet mouth and delicate nose She is inexpensively  
but attractively dressed There is something imme  
diately appealing about her She is very feminine  
and very soft and at the moment her evident terror  
100 augments these qualities

JOE *sees her is startled rises stops her* How do  
you do Miss McLeod! Remember me? I'm Joe Fein  
son the reporter

MARY *disturbed and overwrought studies him  
for a split second then recalls him* Oh yes of  
course I met you with my husband Her mouth  
trembles JOE *smiles nods* What's happened to  
Jim?

JOE *grins reassuringly* Nothing He's all right  
He's in there 110

MARY Mr Feinson, please tell me!

JOE I am

DAKIS This way please *She follows him  
into the LIEUTENANT'S office*

LIEUTENANT How do you do Mrs McLeod?

MARY Lieutenant Monaghan?

LIEUTENANT Yes mam

MARY What is this about Lieutenant?

LIEUTENANT Have a seat?

MARY Where's my husband?

LIEUTENANT He'll be back in a few minutes

MARY He hasn't been *shot*?

LIEUTENANT *reassuringly* No!

MARY I had a terrible feeling that he

LIEUTENANT Nothing like that He's all right

MARY You're sure? You're not trying to break it easy?

LIEUTENANT Nothing like that! I give you my word You'll see him in a few minutes

MARY Then what is it? What's wrong?

LIEUTENANT A certain situation has come up and you might be able to help us out

MARY Me? I'm all at sea, Lieutenant!

LIEUTENANT Mrs McLeod your husband and I never got along too well but I want you to know that right now I'm sticking my neck out a mile to save him I'm not doing it because I like him—I don't I'm doing it because he has a value here and I need him on the squad So like I say I'm going to help him if you help me

MARY What kind of trouble is Jim in?

LIEUTENANT A prisoner here was assaulted maybe injured by your husband

MARY Jim wouldn't do that

LIEUTENANT He did You'll have to take my word for it

MARY Then there must have been a reason A very good reason

LIEUTENANT That's what I have to find out

MARY Jim is kind and gentle

LIEUTENANT That's one side of him

MARY It's the only side I know I've never seen any other *Pause*

LIEUTENANT Please sit down!

MARY Is this man badly hurt?

LIEUTENANT I don't know yet This could become serious, Mrs McLeod This might cost your husband his job He could even wind up in jail

MARY *sinks into the chair* How can I help?

LIEUTENANT By answering some questions By telling me the truth Are you willing to go along?

MARY Yes, of course

LIEUTENANT Did you ever run into a man named Kurt Schneider?

MARY, *hoarsely* No *Coughs*

LIEUTENANT My cigar bothering you?

MARY No I love the smell of a cigar My father always smoked them

LIEUTENANT Did you ever hear your husband mention that name?

MARY What name?

LIEUTENANT This prisoner's name Kurt Schneider MARY *shakes her head* Jim made it a rule never to discuss his work with me

LIEUTENANT It's a good rule We don't like to bring this sordid stuff into our homes

MARY I'm well trained now I don't ask

LIEUTENANT How long you been married?

MARY Three years

LIEUTENANT It took me ten years to train my wife It's a tough life—being married to a cop

MARY I don't think so I'm happy

LIEUTENANT You love your husband?

MARY Very much

LIEUTENANT Where did you live before you were married?

*The phone in the squad room rings*

DAKIS *picks up the receiver* 21st Squad—Detective Dakis

MARY New York

LIEUTENANT You don't sound like a native Where you from? Upstate?

MARY Highland Falls You've got a good ear

LIEUTENANT It's my business

DAKIS *knocks at the* LIEUTENANT'S *door opens it* Captain on the phone Lieutenant

LIEUTENANT, *nods to* MRS MCLEOD Excuse me!

*He picks up the phone turns away from her and talks into the mouthpiece sotto voce In the squad room the SHOPLIFTER rises and stretches*

SHOPLIFTER *coolly to* CALLAHAN *who is at the desk typing* You don't look like a detective

CALLAHAN No? What does a detective look like?

SHOPLIFTER They wear derbies *She giggles archly* You're a nice-looking fellow

CALLAHAN Thanks

SHOPLIFTER Are you married?

CALLAHAN Yes

SHOPLIFTER *disgusted—this is the story of her life* Ya a a! *She slaps the paper on the chair, sits down again*

LIEUTENANT Thanks Captain! *Hangs up turns to* MRS MCLEOD *resumes his interrogation* When'd you leave Highland Falls?

MARY The spring of 1941 I got a job in a defense plant

LIEUTENANT Where?

MARY In Newark

LIEUTENANT This doctor was practicing in Newark at about that time

MARY Doctor?

LIEUTENANT Schneider

MARY Oh he's a doctor?

LIEUTENANT Yes You never met him? Around Newark maybe?

MARY No I don't know him

LIEUTENANT He knows you

MARY What makes you think that?

LIEUTENANT He said so  
 MARY *avoids his probing stare* I'm afraid he's mistaken  
 LIEUTENANT He was positive Kurt Schneider! Ring any bells?  
 MARY No I'm afraid not  
 LIEUTENANT You averted my gaze then Why?  
 MARY Did I? I wasn't conscious of it  
 LIEUTENANT Are you sure a Dr. Schneider never  
 10 treated you?  
 MARY *indignantly* Certainly not I just told you, No  
 LIEUTENANT Why are you so indignant? I didn't say what he treated you for  
 MARY Did this man tell my husband he treated me?  
 LIEUTENANT If you'll tell the truth, Mrs. McLeod, you'll help your husband You'll save me time and trouble But that's all In the end I'll get the correct  
 20 answers We got a hundred ways of finding out the truth  
 MARY I don't know what you're talking about Lieutenant I'm not lying  
 DETECTIVE GALLAGHER *enters with TAMI GIACOPPETTI handsome swarthy, on the sharp loud side, very sure of himself very sure*  
 GIACOPPETTI Can I use the phone Champ?  
 GALLAGHER Not yet Tami *Knocks at the LIEUTENANT'S door*  
 30 GIACOPPETTI O K, Champ  
 LIEUTENANT Yeah! GALLAGHER *enters and hands a note to the LIEUTENANT The LIEUTENANT glances at it pockets it and dismisses GALLAGHER with a gesture* Mrs. McLeod I'm going to ask you a very personal question Now, don't get angry I would never dream of asking any woman this type of question unless I had to You must regard me as the impersonal voice of the law Mrs. McLeod did Dr. Schneider ever perform an abortion on you?  
 40 MARY You've no right to ask me that  
 LIEUTENANT I have to do my job—and my job is to find out the truth Let's not waste any more time! Please answer that question!  
 MARY It seems to me I have some rights to privacy My past life concerns nobody but me  
 LIEUTENANT You have the right to tell the truth Did he?  
 MARY No, Lieutenant Monaghan, he did not  
 LIEUTENANT Does this name mean anything to  
 50 you Tami Giacoppetti?  
 MARY No  
 The LIEUTENANT goes to the door, beckons GALLAGHER nudges TAMI who walks inside, sees MARY stops in his tracks The smile on his face fades  
 GIACOPPETTI *very softly* Hello Mary She withers all evasion gone, her head droops as she avoids their glances

LIEUTENANT to MRS MCLEOD *indicating the ante room* Would you mind stepping in here a minute! To GIACOPPETTI Be right with you He leads her  
 60 into the ante room  
 Whistling a gay tune DETECTIVE O'BRIEN enters the squad room followed by the burglar, LEWIS and a COP  
 BARNES Here's your boy friend Charley!  
 DAKIS How'd you do?  
 O'BRIEN We got the addresses and most of the names  
 DAKIS How many?  
 O'BRIEN Nine To LEWIS Sit down! Over here! 70  
 Lewis has been very co-operative  
 CALLAHAN *has taken off his coat and puts his gun in his holster again As he bends down over the desk*  
 CHARLEY *eyes the gun tries to edge over, stands up*  
 CALLAHAN Whither to Charley?  
 CHARLEY I got to go  
 CALLAHAN Again? This makes the sixth time  
 CHARLEY Well I'm noxious  
 BARNES Sit down, Charley!  
 CALLAHAN He's noxious poor kid 80  
 O'BRIEN He needs a vacation  
 DAKIS He's gonna get one A long one At state expense  
 CALLAHAN, *dialing a number* Nuttin's too good for Charley On phone Hello Mrs. Lundstrom? This is Detective Callahan of the Twenty-first Precinct We got that property was burglarized from your apartment Will you please come down and identify it? Yeah! Yeah! We got em Right Yes Ma'am Hangs  
 90 up looks at the squeal card dials another number  
 O'BRIEN on phone simultaneously Hello Mr. Donatello, please Mr. Donatello? This is Detective O'Brien of the 21st Squad Yes, sir I think we've caught them Yes I have some articles here Not all Would you mind coming down to the station house and identifying them? Right He hangs up  
 CALLAHAN on phone Hello! Mrs. Demetrios? This is Detective Callahan Remember me? Twenty-first Squad Yeah I'm still roarin'! How are you Toots? 100  
 Laughs Retom match? Where's your husband to night? Okay MCLEOD enters with an ancient bundle of records wrapped in a sheet of dusty paper and tied with twine He is blowing off clouds of dust I'll be off duty after midnight Starts to hang up, suddenly remembers the purpose of the phone call Oh by the way, we got that stuff was burglarized from your apartment Come down and identify it O K yuh barracuda! Hangs up A man eater  
 O'BRIEN You watch it!  
 CALLAHAN What I don't do for the good of the 110  
 soivice I should be getting first grade money  
 MCLEOD undoing the package You'll be getting a first grade knock on the head

CALLAHAN, *disdainfully* Blain trust *He walks away*

BRODY, *approaches* MC LEOD Say Jim I had a long talk with Mr Pritchett and he's willing to drop the charges

MC LEOD He is? *Turns to* MR PRITCHETT What's this about, Mr Pritchett?

MR PRITCHETT I decided not to bring charges against *Nods toward* ARTHUR

10 MC LEOD I thought you were going to go through with this

MR PRITCHETT I'd like to give the boy another chance

MC LEOD To steal from someone else?

MR PRITCHETT I wouldn't want this on my conscience

MC LEOD Supposing he commits a worse crime What about your conscience then Mr Pritchett?

MR PRITCHETT I'll gamble I'm a gambler I bet 20 on horses—this once I'll bet on a human being

MC LEOD Stick to horses—the percentage is better

BRODY Wait a minute Jim I advised Mr Pritchett to do this I thought

MC LEOD *harshly* You had no right to do that Lou This is my case You know better

BRODY I didn't think you'd mind

MC LEOD Well, I do

BRODY, *angrily* Well I'm sorry!

SUSAN But I'm going to return the money And if 30 he's satisfied what difference does it make to you?

MC LEOD It isn't as easy as that This isn't a civil action this is a criminal action

GUS *enters with sheet in his hand* Jim! Look at this sheet on Charley! MC LEOD *takes it studies it* As long as your arm To BARNES Keep your eye on that son of a-bitch!

MC LEOD *studying the sheet grimly* Hm! *He crosses with* GUS *to the gate exits into the hallway*

MR PRITCHETT *to* BRODY But you said

40 BRODY I'm sorry I made a mistake It's his case The disposition of it is up to him

SUSAN But if everybody concerned is

BRODY I'm sorry girly You gotta leave me outa this I got no right to interfere Take it up with him *Walks off left leaving* SUSAN *and* PRITCHETT *suspended in mid air* SUSAN *smks into a chair awaiting*

MC LEOD's *return glancing off despairingly in his direction* PRITCHETT *walks up to the gate leans on it looking off into the hallway* The LIEUTENANT *re* 50 *turns to his office from the ante room*

GIACOPPETTI *rises* What's this about Champ?

LIEUTENANT Sit down Tam! *Picks up* TAMI's *hat from the desk looks at the label in it* Dobbs Beaver? Impressed A twenty buck hat You must be rolling Hands TAMI *his hat*

GIACOPPETTI *taking it* Forty bucks I'm comfortable No complaints What's on your mind Champ?

LIEUTENANT The woman you just said hello to GIACOPPETTI Mary! What kind of trouble could she be in? 60

LIEUTENANT I'd just like a little information

GIACOPPETTI *frowns* That guls a hundred percent I wouldn't say a word against her

LIEUTENANT You don't have to She ain't in no trouble

GIACOPPETTI No That's good What do you want from me, Champ?

LIEUTENANT Mr Giacoppetti all this is off the record

GIACOPPETTI When I talk, it's always for the record Champ I only say something when I got something to say Champ 70

LIEUTENANT Look Giacoppetti I'm Lieutenant Monaghan I'm in charge here Keep your tongue in your mouth and we'll get along

GIACOPPETTI Mind if I phone my lawyer?

LIEUTENANT It ain't necessary

GIACOPPETTI My lawyer gets mad

LIEUTENANT Nothing you say here will be held against you understand? I give you my word 80

GIACOPPETTI I won't hurt that gul

LIEUTENANT I don't want you to She's only a witness It's someone else

GIACOPPETTI O K Shoot!

LIEUTENANT Married?

GIACOPPETTI Yeah

LIEUTENANT How long?

GIACOPPETTI Fifteen years What a racket that is!

LIEUTENANT You're an expert ain't you?

GIACOPPETTI On what? Marriage? 90

LIEUTENANT Rackets

GIACOPPETTI I'm a legitimate business man Take it up with my attorney

LIEUTENANT Look Mr Giacoppetti We've got a sheet on you We know you're in black market up to your neck But we don't operate in the State of New Jersey And what went on there ain't none of our business Unless you make it so Kapish?

GIACOPPETTI Yeah I kapish

LIEUTENANT Got any kids? 100

GIACOPPETTI No

LIEUTENANT I got five You don't know what you're missing Tam!

GIACOPPETTI *rises, furious* Don't rub salt in! I know I got a wife as big as the Sahara Desert—and twice as sterile I got nine brothers, four sisters all on my payroll None of 'em worth anything They got kids—like rabbits they got 'em—nephews nieces all over the lot But a guy like me, I should become a nation and I got no kids Not one So don't rub salt in eh? 11

LIEUTENANT *laughs* O K I guess I know how you feel

GIACOPPETTI *controls himself, smiles sheepishly*

You're a sharpshooter, Champ You hit me right on my spot

LIEUTENANT When did you know this girl?

GIACOPPETTI Seven years ago

LIEUTENANT You like her?

GIACOPPETTI I was crazy about her She was my girl I'd married her if I could a gotten a divorce

LIEUTENANT What broke it up?

GIACOPPETTI I don't know

10 LIEUTENANT What do you think?

GIACOPPETTI I think maybe I better call my lawyer

LIEUTENANT Come on, Giacoppetti What the hell— You've gone this far It's off the record

GIACOPPETTI Aah she give me the air! She got caught and that soured her on me Dames! Who can understand them?

LIEUTENANT Send her to a doctor?

GIACOPPETTI To a doctor? Me? I wanted that kid  
20 I told her Give me a son—anything goes Any thing she wants The moon out of the sky I'd get it for her Dames! Who can understand them? She goes off That's the last I see of her Next thing I know I hear she went to some doctor I went looking for her If I'd found her I'd a broken her neck I found him though I personally beat the hell out of him Sent him to a hospital

LIEUTENANT What was his name?

GIACOPPETTI A Dutchman Schneider some-  
30 thing

LIEUTENANT Kurt Schneider

GIACOPPETTI That's it

LIEUTENANT rises Thank you Tam!

GIACOPPETTI That all?

LIEUTENANT opens the door of the ante-room beckons to MARY

LIEUTENANT Almost

GIACOPPETTI Now will you tell me what this is about?

40 LIEUTENANT Just a minute MARY enters Mrs McLeod, Mr Giacoppetti has told me everything MARY He has?

GIACOPPETTI In a case like this they find out anyway It's better to

MARY begins to weep

LIEUTENANT Now now! Pause I'm sorry Mrs McLeod Would you like a glass of water?

MARY, nods Please! He fetches her a glass of water

50 LIEUTENANT Mr Giacoppetti! Nods toward the ante room They both exit

Outside, night perceptibly lowers over the city The squad room grows ominously dark MC LEOD enters CHARLEY's sheet in his hand

MC LEOD So you didn't done it, Charley? He switches on the lights

CHARLEY, weeping and wringing his hands No! No! On my mother's grave!

MC LEOD And you never been in jail?

CHARLEY, wailing May I drop dead on this spot! 60 What do you guys want from me?

MC LEOD, to MR PRITCHETT Heartbreaking isn't it? Crosses to CHARLEY These are your fingerprints Charley They never lie He reads the sheet Bur glary eight arrests Five assaults Seven muggings Three rapes Two arrests for murder Six extortions Three jail sentences One prison break! Nice little sheet Charley? To BARNES He's a four-time loser You have a club If he makes one false move—you know what to do with it—hit him over the head 70

BARNES Don't worry I will

MC LEOD Book him! Nods in LEWIS direction This bum too

LEWIS rises

CHARLEY abandons his weeping act abruptly looks at MC LEOD and begins to grin Got a cigarette?

MC LEOD furiously What do you want—room service?

CHARLEY laughing It's the green light hotel ain't it? 80

MC LEOD Take him away!

BARNES O.K. Charley To LEWIS Come on

Exit BARNES LEWIS and CHARLEY, the latter laughing raucously at MC LEOD

MC LEOD turns to PRITCHETT Don't invest these criminals with your nervous system Mr Pritchett Sure! They laugh they cry but don't think it's your laughter or your tears It isn't They're a different species a different breed Believe me I know

JOE FEINSON enters 90

SUSAN shrilly My God—didn't you ever make a mistake?

MC LEOD Yes When I was new on this job we brought in two boys who were caught stealing from a car They looked like babies They cried I let them go Two nights later—two nights later—one of them held up a butcher in Harlem Shot him through the head and killed him Yes I made a mistake and I'm not going to make it again

SUSAN But Officer you 10

MC LEOD harshly Young lady I don't want to discuss this with you Now don't interrupt me!

ARTHUR rises Don't talk to her like that She has a right to speak

MC LEOD his face goes black with anger He roars at ARTHUR Shut up! Sit down! ARTHUR sits MC LEOD controls himself lights a cigarette his hand trembling When you're dealing with the criminal mind softness is dangerous Mr Pritchett

MR PRITCHETT But if it's a first offense 11

MC LEOD Its never a first offense its just the first time they get caught

SUSAN Why are you so vicious?

MC LEOD I'm not vicious young lady I didn't steal this man's money *Extinguishes the match violently and hurls it in ARTHUR'S direction* He did To MR PRITCHETT This is a wai M1 Pritchett We know it they know it but you don't We're your army We're here to protect you But you've got to co-operate I'm sick and tired of massaging the complainant into doing his simple duty! You civilians are too lazy or too selfish or too scared or just too

10

indifferent to even want to appear in court and see the charges through that you yourselves bring That makes us—street cleaners They have a stick sweep

out the streets we have a stick sweep out the human garbage they pile it in wagons, dump it in the East River we pile it in wagons dump it in the Tombs And what happens?—The next day all back

again  
MR PRITCHETT But if I get paid  
MC LEOD *impatiently* I don't care about that

20

This is a criminal action Are you or aren't you going through with it? Because I'm not going to let him go

MR PRITCHETT If I don't bring charges?

MC LEOD Then I'm going to book him anyway, and *subpoena* you into court

MR PRITCHETT Well I I

MC LEOD It's my duty to protect you in spite of yourself

MR PRITCHETT I guess I've got to leave it up to you Officer Whatever you say

30

MC LEOD I say, Prosecute!  
MR PRITCHETT All right! You know best To SUSAN I'm sorry But he had no right to rob me in the first place That was a terrible thing to do

MC LEOD, *takes him by the arm, leads him to the gate* We won't take up any more of your time I'll see you in court tomorrow morning at ten

MR PRITCHETT *goes*

SUSAN Mister Pritchett *She rises and runs after him*

40

MC LEOD *witheringly* There goes John Q Public a man of iron

JOE Humble yourself, sweetheart, humble yourself!

MC LEOD What?

JOE Seamus Seamus why must you always make everything so black and white? Remember we're all of us falling down all the time Don't be so intolerant

MC LEOD You're out of line

50

JOE Listen to me Seamus Listen! I love you, and I'm trying to warn you

MC LEOD What about? What's on your mind?

JOE You're digging your own grave A bottomless pit baby It's right there in front of you One more step and you're in Humble yourself sweetheart, humble yourself!

MC LEOD You're very Delphic today Yussel What's the oracle of CCNY trying to tell me?

*There's a long pause* JOE *examines his face* All friendship is gone out of it It's hard as granite now the jaw muscles bulging JOE *smiles sadly to himself* shakes his head

60

JOE Nothing Forget it He goes

LIEUTENANT *returns to his office followed by GIACOPPETTI* MARY *rises* Feel better now?

MARY Yes Thank you

LIEUTENANT Are you ready to tell me the truth?

MARY Yes

LIEUTENANT Your husband's been persecuting Schneider for over a year because of this?

70

MARY No

LIEUTENANT Schneider's attorney says so

MARY I don't care what he says Jim never knew He never knew I'm sure of that

LIEUTENANT Careful now! Weigh your words This is very important Any minute that phone'll ring If Schneider is critically hurt it's out of my hands The next second this case'll be with the homicide squad The Commissioner'll be here the District Attorney If that happens I gotta have all the facts

80

MARY Jim didn't know

LIEUTENANT That's the question I gotta be sure of now *Thinks a moment, goes to the door calls* McLeod!

MC LEOD Yes sir? *The LIEUTENANT motions him in* MC LEOD *enters sees MARY stops short* Mary! What are you doing here? What's this, Lieutenant? What's my wife

LIEUTENANT I sent for her

90

MC LEOD Why?

LIEUTENANT This is Mr Giacoppetti

GIACOPPETTI Hi Champ!

MC LEOD What's this about Lieutenant?

LIEUTENANT Schneider! Why'd you lie to me?

MC LEOD I didn't lie to you

MARY May I may I please

LIEUTENANT Yes Go ahead *Watching* MC LEOD

MARY Jim the Lieutenant won't believe me that you knew nothing about this

100

MC LEOD About what Mary?

MARY Dr Schneider

MC LEOD What's he got to do with you?

MARY This man you struck this Dr Schneider

MC LEOD Don't keep saying that Mary He's no doctor

MARY He isn't? I thought he was I had occasion to see him once I went to him once when I needed help

110

MC LEOD You *what?* *After a long pause studies her, murmurs to himself*

MARY A long time ago Jim *To the* LIEUTENANT  
I told you he didn't

MC LEOD Wait a minute! *Turns to* GIACOPPETTI  
What's he got to do with this?

MARY We were going together

MC LEOD I see

MARY I

MC LEOD O K Diagrams aren't necessary I get  
the picture

10 GIACOPPETTI I beat the hell out of this Schneider  
myself *He touches* MC LEOD *on the arm* MC LEOD  
*with a growl slaps his hand* Geeze! *Holds his hand*  
*in agony*

LIEUTENANT Cut that out!

GIACOPPETTI I don't have to take that from you  
Champ!

MC LEOD Touch me again and I'll tear your arm  
out of the socket

20 LIEUTENANT, *to* MC LEOD You cut that out! In  
one second I'm going to flatten you myself *There*  
*is a long pause*

MC LEOD Do you mind if I talk to my wife  
alone?

*The* LIEUTENANT *looks at* MARY

MARY Please!

LIEUTENANT All right Tam! You can go

GIACOPPETTI *goes* *The* LIEUTENANT *walks into his*  
*ante room slams the door*

30 MARY I'm terribly sorry Jim Please forgive me  
*She touches him, he moves away to avoid her touch*  
Is this man badly hurt?

MC LEOD No

MARY Then you're not in serious trouble Jim?

MC LEOD He's only acting Nothing will come  
of it

MARY You're sure?

MC LEOD Yes

MARY Thank God for that

MC LEOD My immaculate wife!

40 MARY I never said I was

MC LEOD You never said you weren't! Why didn't  
you tell me?

MARY I loved you and I was afraid of losing you

MC LEOD How long did you go with him?

MARY A few months

MC LEOD How many?

MARY About four

MC LEOD Four isn't a few

MARY No, I suppose not

50 MC LEOD Did he give you money?

MARY No

MC LEOD But he did give you presents?

MARY Yes He gave me some presents of course

MC LEOD Expensive ones?

MARY I don't know

MC LEOD What do you mean you don't know?

MARY I don't know What difference does it  
make?

MC LEOD This difference I'd just as soon Schnei-  
der died I'd sooner go to jail for twenty years—than  
find out this way that my wife was a whore 60

MARY Don't say that Jim

MC LEOD That's the word I didn't invent it  
That's what they call it

MARY I don't care about them I only care about  
you Jim and it isn't true You know it isn't true

MC LEOD Why didn't you tell me?

MARY I wanted to but I didn't dare I would  
have lost you

MC LEOD I thought I knew you I thought you  
were everything good and pure And with a  
pig like that! Live dirt! 70

MARY Jim, don't judge me Try and understand  
Right and wrong aren't always as simple as they  
seem to you I was on my own for the first time in  
a large city The war was on Everything was fever-  
ish! I'd only been out with kids my own age until I  
met this man He paid me a lot of attention I was  
flattered I'd never met anyone like him before in  
my whole life I thought he was romantic and glam-  
orous I thought I was in love with him 80

MC LEOD Are you trying to justify yourself in  
those terms?

MARY Not justify! Just explain It was wrong I  
know it I discovered that for myself

MC LEOD When? Just now?

*The phone rings* DAKIS *answers it*

MARY I'm trying to make my life everything you  
want it to be If I could make my past life over I'd  
do that too gladly But I can't No one can I made  
a mistake I admit it I've paid for it plenty  
Isn't that enough? 90

DAKIS *crosses to the* LIEUTENANT'S *office enters*  
Where's the Lieutenant?

MC LEOD Inside

DAKIS *shouting off* Lieutenant!—Hospital's on the  
phone

LIEUTENANT *enters and picks up the phone* Yeah!

Put him on! Yeah? You're sure? O K  
Doc Thank you *He hangs up* The devil takes care  
of his own! It looks like Schneider's all right  
They can't find anything wrong with him 100

*There is a long pause*

MARY May I go now?

LIEUTENANT Yes Mrs McLeod

*Exit* LIEUTENANT

MARY Jim I beg you Please understand

MC LEOD What's there to understand? You  
got undressed before him

MARY Jim!

MC LEOD You went to bed with him

MARY Jim! I can't take much more of this 110



MC LEOD You carried his child awhile inside you  
and then you killed it

MARY Yes That's true

MC LEOD Everything I hate even murder  
What the hell's left to understand!

MARY *completely stunned looks at his face swollen with anger, the face of a madman She backs up to the door, suddenly opens it turns flees*

CURTAIN

### ACT THREE

SCENE *The scene is the same eight thirty by the clock on the wall Night has fallen The black looming masses and the million twinkling eyes of the city that never sleeps, the flashing General Motors sign the church spire and cross seem to enter into and become a part of this strange room*

*At rise the LIEUTENANT'S office is dark and empty The squad room however, is crowded and humming like a dynamo Half a dozen civilians under the guidance of DAKIS and CALLAHAN are identifying the stolen property piled high on the table BRODY is fingerprinting LEWIS CHARLEY is sitting pantomiming to himself, the colored officer watching him closely MC LEOD is seated at the typewriter tapping off ARTHUR'S squeal ARTHUR is seated to the right of the typewriter desk his eyes registering the nightmare SUSAN behind ARTHUR'S chair hovers over him staring down at him like some impotent guardian angel Near the same desk the SHOPLIFTERS big innocent calf eyes are busy watching darting in all directions at once enjoying the Roman holiday A very chic lady and gentleman in formal evening attire who are here to claim stolen property are being photographed by a newspaper photographer JOE weaves in and out of the throng gleaning his information and jotting it down in a notebook*

PHOTOGRAPHER, *to the chic lady in the evening gown who is posing for him, holding a stolen silver soup tureen Hold up the loot! Little higher please!*

40 *She holds it higher Flash! Just one more please!*

MC LEOD, *at the desk to ARTHUR* Hail?

ARTHUR Brown

MC LEOD Eyes?

ARTHUR Eyes? I don't know greenish?

MC LEOD *peering at ARTHUR* Look brown

SUSAN Hazel Brown and green flecked with gold  
*Photographer's flash!*

MC LEOD Hazel Types

PHOTOGRAPHER Ankyou! *Reloads his camera*

50 DAKIS, *to the GENTLEMAN* Sign here *He signs*  
That's all We'll notify you when to come down to  
pick up the rest of your property

GENTLEMAN *plucks out some tickets from his wallet hands them to DAKIS* Excellent work Officer excellent! My compliments

*Exit GENTLEMAN and LADY*

PHOTOGRAPHER *to JOE* Did you get the name?

JOE, *writing story in notebook* I got it, I got it

PHOTOGRAPHER Park Avenue?

JOE Spell it backwards

PHOTOGRAPHER K R A-P

JOE You got it

*The PHOTOGRAPHER chortles*

DAKIS *examines the tickets with a slow mounting burn* *To CALLAHAN* How do you like that jerk? Two tickets for the flower show yet! There are two kinds of people in this precinct—the crumbs and the eelie and the eelie are crumbs

CALLAHAN *laughs through his nose DAKIS sits down and checks through his squeals*

MC LEOD *typing* You might as well go home now young lady as soon as we finish this we're through

SUSAN A few minutes more Please!

MC LEOD *sighs* *To ARTHUR* Weight?

ARTHUR A hundred and fifty two

MC LEOD Height?

ARTHUR Five eleven

MC LEOD *Identifying marks? Scars? Come here!*

*Pulls ARTHUR'S face around* Scar on the left cheek

Types And a tattoo Which arm was that on?

ARTHUR *raises his left hand* Left? A heart and the name Joy

*The phone rings CALLAHAN answers it*

CALLAHAN 21st Squad Detectives Callahan Yeah? A jumper? Fifty-third Street? MC LEOD *stops typing listens* Her name? Mc what? geeze!

MC LEOD *calls across the room sharply* What was that name?

CALLAHAN *on the phone* Wait a minute

*To MC LEOD* What's at Jim?

MC LEOD *tense with sudden apprehension* You got a jumper?

CALLAHAN Yeah

MC LEOD Woman?

CALLAHAN Yeah

MC LEOD She killed?

CALLAHAN Sixteenth floor

MC LEOD Who is it?

CALLAHAN What's with you?

MC LEOD Who is it?

CALLAHAN Name is McFadden Old lady Her son just identified her Why?

MC LEOD *mops his brow with his handkerchief, mumbles* Nothing That's my street 53rd

CALLAHAN *looks at MC LEOD with puzzlement, concludes his phone conversation sotto voce*

SUSAN *smiling sadly at ARTHUR* A tattoo?

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ARTHUR, *sheepishly* The others all had them It made me feel like a real sailor I was *such* a kid Seven years ago

SUSAN Seven? It was yesterday Jiggs

ARTHUR Seven years Another world

BRODY *finishes fingerprinting* LEWIS All done, Lewis! Go in there and wash your hands Next

LEWIS *dumb bravo walks to the wash room slowly nonchalantly, his head lolling from side to side as if it were attached to his spine by a rubber band*

MC LEOD Arthur!

ARTHUR *rises walks slowly to BRODY at the fingerprint board They exchange glances*

BRODY *softly* This hand son Just relax it Aaats it This finger Roll it toward me

DAKIS *rises* Well three old squeals polished off I'm clean *He crosses replaces the cards in the file*

CALLAHAN There's one here I'm sure they did *Propels himself in the swivel chair over to*

CHARLEY Charley did you burglarize this apartment? CHARLEY *snuffs a contemptuous silence!* Why don't you give us a break? You do us a favor we might help you

CHARLEY How the hell you gonna help me? I'm a four time loser I'm gone to jail for life How the hell you gonna help me?

CALLAHAN You lived a louse, you wanta die a louse?

CHARLEY Yaa!

CALLAHAN You quiff!

CHARLEY Careful! De sign says courtesy

CALLAHAN Coitesy? Foi you? You want coitesy? Heie! *Tears off the sign hits him on the head with it* CHARLEY *laughs* LEWIS *comes swaggering out of the wash room*

BRODY *finishes fingerprinting* ARTHUR That's all, son Go inside and wash your hands

ARTHUR *goes in to the wash room* SUSAN *holds on to herself tightly*

SHOPLIFTER *rises—to SUSAN comforting her* It don't hurt You roll it *Demonstrates* Like that It just gets yours hands a little dirty It washes right off It's nothing SUSAN *crumples into a chair* What's a matter? Did I say something? SUSAN *shakes her head* Are you married? SUSAN *shakes her head* Me neither Everybody tells you why don't you get married You should get married My mother my father my sisters my brother— Get married! As if I didn't *want* to get married Where do you find a man? Get me a man I'll marry him *Anything!* As long as it's got pants Big little fat, thin I'll marry him You think I'd be *here?* For a lousy cocodile bag? I'd be home cooking him such a meal Get married!! It's easy to talk! *She sits again wrapped up in the tragedy of her spinsterhood*

MC LEOD, *at the main desk—to LEWIS* Sign your

name here Lewis! LEWIS *signs* The PHOTOGRAPHER *signals* JOE

JOE to BARNES O K Steve! Get em over here

BARNES *elbowing LEWIS over nudges CHARLEY with his stick* Rise and shine Charley *They line up in front of the desk*

PHOTOGRAPHER to BARNES Stand on the end! PATROLMAN BARNES *obeys*

BARNES Stand here Lewis

LEWIS *comes close to CHARLEY murmurs in his ear* You louse! I ought to kill you

CHARLEY *mutters* Me? The thanks I get

JOE, to PHOTOGRAPHER Wait a minute! I want to line up those bullets I want em in the shot *He stands the bullets on end* Can you get em in?

MC LEOD *picks up ARTHUR'S sheet and crosses to the desk*

PHOTOGRAPHER Yeah! Ready?

LEWIS Thirty grand

CHARLEY Thirty bull!

LEWIS I saw the list

PHOTOGRAPHER to BARNES, *posing them for the shot* Grab that one by the arm!

CHARLEY, *mutters* Lists? It's a racket! People get big insurance on fake stuff They collect on it

BARNES *smiling for the photo mutters through his gleaming teeth* Sh! You spoil the picture *Flash* The picture is taken BARNES *drops the smile* Over there! *He waves them to a seat with his club turns to the photographer to make sure his name is spelled correctly*

LEWIS What about that fourteen hundred dollars?

CHARLEY *indignantly* I had it on me for your protection If this flatfoot had any sense he was supposed to take it and let us go Dumb cop! Can I help it?

LEWIS *pushes his face into CHARLEY'S threateningly* I want my share

CHARLEY All right Lewis I'm not gonna argue with you If it'll make you happy I'll give you the whole fourteen hundred Satisfied?

LEWIS, *thinks it over* Ya

CHARLEY Good

BARNES, *crosses over to them* No talking—you!

MC LEOD, to ARTHUR Your signature Here!

ARTHUR *glances at the card hesitates*

SUSAN Shouldn't he see a lawyer first?

MC LEOD It's routine

SUSAN Anyway a lawyer should

MC LEOD *presses his temples annoyed*

ARTHUR Susan! *Shakes his head*

SUSAN Excuse me *She forces a wan smile nods, puts her fingers to her lips* MC LEOD *hands* ARTHUR *the pen* ARTHUR *looks about seeking a depository for his cigarette butt*

MC LEOD On the floor ARTHUR *throws it on the floor* Step on it! ARTHUR *steps on butt*

ARTHUR Where do I sign?

MC LEOD Here *Indicates the line on the card*

ARTHUR *signs* SUSAN *uses*

SUSAN I believe in you Arthur I want you to know Deep inside—deep down no matter what happens—I have faith in you

JOE to PHOTOGRAPHER Now, this one To  
MC LEOD You want to be in this?

MC LEOD, *pressing his temples* No! Got an aspirin,  
10 Yussel?

JOE *curtly* No *Walks away*

PHOTOGRAPHER to ARTHUR You mind standing  
up? *The flash as he snaps the picture galvanizes*  
SUSAN

SUSAN *hysterically* No! No! They don't have to do  
that to him! They don't have to To BRODY  
Officer Brody They're not going to print that in the  
papers are they?

ARTHUR, *goes to her* It's all right Suzy! Stop  
20 trembling Please I don't care

BRODY *beckons* JOE and PHOTOGRAPHER *out through*  
*the gate* Joe! Teeny! They follow him off

SUSAN I'm not really It was the sud-  
den flash! *She buries her head in her hands turns*  
*away to control herself* CHARLEY *laughs softly*

DAKIS, *putting on his hat and jacket glances at the*  
*clock* Well quarter to nine Night Court'll be open  
by the time we get there

SHOPLIFTER *rising picking up her bag and scarf*  
30 What do I do?

DAKIS They'll tell you Your brother-in-law's  
gonna be there am't he?

SHOPLIFTER Yeah All I can do is thank goodness  
my sister's sexy Well *She looks about* So  
long everybody! You been very nice to me Really  
very nice And I'm sorry I caused you all this trou-  
ble! Good bye! *She and* DAKIS *go*

MC LEOD to SUSAN You better go home now,  
young lady It's all over

40 SUSAN May I talk to Arthur? For two minutes  
alone? Then I'll go I won't make any more trouble,  
I promise

MC LEOD All right *He handcuffs* ARTHUR *to the*  
*chair* Two minutes *He goes into the* LIEUTENANT'S  
*office sits in the darkened room*

SUSAN to ARTHUR *her lips trembling* Jiggs

ARTHUR *quickly* Don't!

SUSAN *dragging a chair over to him* I'm not going  
to cry This is no time for emotionalism I mean we  
50 must be calm and wise We must be realists *She sits*  
*down takes his hand* The minute I walk out of here  
I'm going to call Father

ARTHUR No, Susan don't do that!

SUSAN But he likes you so much Arthur He'll be  
glad to help

ARTHUR I don't want him to know I'm ashamed  
I'm so ashamed of myself

SUSAN Jiggs it's understandable

ARTHUR Is it? God almighty I don't understand  
it! I stole Suzy I stole money from a man who  
60 trusted me! Where am I? Am I still floating around  
in the middle of the Pacific looking for concrete  
platforms that aren't there? How mixed up can you  
get?

SUSAN But Jiggs everybody gets mixed up some  
time or other

ARTHUR They don't steal *Pause* Delirium isn't it?

SUSAN O.K. So it is delirium Jiggs So what?  
You're coming out of it fine

ARTHUR *shakes his head* Look around Susan  
70 Look at this *Studies the handcuffs* The dreams I  
had—the plans I made to end like this?

SUSAN This isn't the end of the world Jiggs

ARTHUR It is for me *He rattles the handcuffs* All  
I ever wanted was to live quietly in a small college  
town to study and teach No! *Bitterly* This  
isn't a time for study and teachers this is a  
time for generals

SUSAN *passionately* I hate that kind of talk Jiggs  
Everywhere I hear it I don't believe it What  
80 ever happens to you you can still pick up and go  
on If ever there was a time for students and teach-  
ers this is it I know you can still make whatever  
you choose of your life *She pauses aware of his*  
*black anguish* Arthur! Do you want Joy? Would that  
help? Would you like to see her and talk to her?

ARTHUR No

SUSAN I'll go to Connecticut and bring her back?

ARTHUR I don't want her

SUSAN I'll get her here Say the word I'll bring  
90 her here Arthur She'll come You know she will

ARTHUR I don't want her, Suzy I don't want Joy

SUSAN You're sure?

ARTHUR Yes *Pause* For five years I've been in  
love with a girl that doesn't exist I wouldn't know  
what to say to her now *The noises of the city out*  
*side rise and fall* That's finished Washed up

SUSAN Oh Arthur! Why couldn't you have fallen  
in love with me?

ARTHUR *looks at her for a long time, then ten* 100  
*derly* I've always loved you Suzy You were always  
my baby

SUSAN I've news for you I voted for the President  
in the last election I'm years past the age of consent

ARTHUR Just an old bag?

SUSAN Arthur, why didn't you fall in love with  
me? I'd have been so much better for you I know  
I'm not as beautiful as Joy, but

ARTHUR But you are Joy's prettier than you,  
Susan but you're more beautiful 110

SUSAN Oh, Jiggs, you fracture me! Let us not  
*She almost cries*

ARTHUR Let us not be emotional We were going  
to be realists Remember?

SUSAN Yes

ARTHUR Suzy when I go to jail *Her lip quivers again* Now Realists ??

SUSAN I'm not going to cry

ARTHUR Be my sensible Susan!

SUSAN Jiggs, I can't be sensible about you I love you

ARTHUR Suzy darling

SUSAN Jiggs whatever happens when it's over—  
10 let's go back home again

ARTHUR That would be wonderful, Suzy That would be everything I ever wanted

CHARLEY *pretends to play a violin humming Hearts and Flowers Then he laughs raucously nudging LEWIS* Hear that Lewis? He's facin five to ten? Wait'll the boys go to work on him ARTHUR and SUSAN *look at him* To SUSAN What makes you think he'll want you then?

SUSAN What?

20 CHARLEY A kid like this in jail They toss for him

SUSAN What do you mean?

CHARLEY To see whose chicken he's gonna be!

SUSAN What does that mean? What's he talking about?

ARTHUR Don't listen to him To CHARLEY Shut up! Who asked you to

CHARLEY After a while you get to like it Lots a guys come out, they got no use for dames after that  
30 that

ARTHUR Shut up!

CHARLEY Look at Lewis there He's more woman than man ain't you ain't you Lewis? LEWIS *grins*

ARTHUR *rises in a white fury goes for CHARLEY dragging the chair to which he's handcuffed* Shut up! I'll crack your goddam skull!

BARNES *runs over to CHARLEY*

SUSAN Stop it! Stop! BRODY *enters quickly* Officer Brody make him stop! Make him stop!

40 BRODY to ARTHUR Take it easy! Sit down! Kicks CHARLEY in the shins Why don't you shut up?

SUSAN Oh Officer Brody help us! Help us!

BRODY Take it easy He ain't convicted yet The Judge might put him on probation He might get off altogether A lot of things might happen

CHARLEY, *bending over feeling his bruised shin* Yak! Yak!

BRODY One more peep outa you! One! *He slaps*

CHARLEY *turns to BARNES irritated* Take them in side!  
50 side!

BARNES *waves CHARLEY and LEWIS into the next room As they pass ARTHUR LEWIS eyes ARTHUR up and down grinning and nodding CHARLEY hums his mockery, Hearts and Flowers BARNES prods CHARLEY with his night stick muttering, We heard the voice before They exit*

BRODY, to SUSAN If the complainant still wants to

give him a break that'll help You got a good lawyer? *She shakes her head* I'll give you the name of a crackerjack! I'm not supposed to but I'll call him myself There are a lot of tricks to this business  
60 myself

SUSAN Don't let it happen!

BRODY He's your picture *Crumples up the photographic plate, tosses it into the waste basket goes to his locker fishes out his bottle of liquor*  
SUSAN *begins to weep*

ARTHUR Susan! Susan! The rest of my life I'm going to find ways to make this up to you I swear What ever happens *He puts his arms around her pulls her down into the chair alongside him holds her tight*  
70 her tight

SUSAN *clinging to him* Arthur I

ARTHUR Sh! Don't say anything more Suzy We've a minute left Let's just sit here like this quietly SUSAN *starts to speak* Sh! Quiet! *She buries her head in his shoulder and they sit there in a gentle embrace After a second's silence, she relaxes* Better?  
SUSAN *nods* Mm!

BRODY *goes into the LIEUTENANT'S office looking for MC LEOD* What are you sitting here in the dark for? *He switches on the light* Want a drink Jim?  
80 for?

MC LEOD No

BRODY *pours himself a stiff one* Jim I've been your partner for thirteen years I ever ask you for a favor?

MC LEOD *pressing his hand to his temples* What is it Lou?

BRODY That kid outside MC LEOD *groans* I want you to give him a break

MC LEOD You know better I can't adjudicate this case  
90 case

BRODY And what the hell do you think you're doing?

MC LEOD What makes him so special?

BRODY A lot I think he's a good kid He's got stuff on the ball Given another chance *Pause* Jim he reminds me of my boy

MC LEOD Mike?—was a hero

BRODY Why? Because he was killed? If Mike'd be alive today he'd have the same problems this kid has  
100 has

MC LEOD Lou Lou—how can you compare?

BRODY Thousands like em I guess New generation a screwed-up world We don't even understand them Jim I didn't Mike, till he was killed *Pause* Too late then *He swallows his drink* How about it?

MC LEOD Don't ask me, will you?

BRODY But I am

MC LEOD I can't I can't do it Lou I can't drop the charges  
110 the charges

BRODY Louder please! I don't seem to hear so good outa this ear

MC LEOD This fellow and Mike—day and night—  
There's no compromise

BRODY Jim this is me Lou Brody Remember  
me? What do you mean you can't drop it? You  
coulda let him go two hours ago You still can The  
complainant left it up to you I heard him

MC LEOD Be logical, Lou

BRODY To hell with logic I seen you logic the  
life out of a thing Heart! Heart! The world's crying  
for a little heart *Pause* What do you say?

MC LEOD No Lou No dice!

BRODY My partner! Arrest his own mother

MC LEOD I'm too old to start compromising now

BRODY There's a full moon out tonight It shows  
in your puss

MC LEOD You shouldn't drink so much Lou It  
melts the lining of your brain

BRODY *pushes the bottle to him* Here! You take it  
Maybe that's what you need Maybe it'll melt that  
rock you got in there for a heart

MC LEOD *a moan of anguish* For Christ's sake  
stop it Lou, will you? My nerves are like banjo  
strings

BRODY Well play something on them Play  
Loves Old Sweet Song

MC LEOD Shut up! Lay off! God damn it! I'm  
warning you Lay off! *Silence*

BRODY *studies him then softer* What's the  
matter?

MC LEOD I'm drowning Lou I'm drowning That's  
all I'm drowning in my own juices

BRODY I wish I could understand what makes you  
tick

MC LEOD I don't expect you to understand me,  
Lou I know I'm different than the others I think  
differently I'm not a little boy who won't grow up  
playing cops and robbers all his life like Callahan  
and I'm not an insurance salesman like you Lou  
I'm here out of principle! Principle Lou All my life  
I've lived according to principle! And God damn it,  
I couldn't deviate even if I wanted to

BRODY Sometimes you gotta bend with the wind  
or break! Be a little human, Jim! Don't be such  
a fuggin' monument!

MC LEOD How how? How do you compromise?  
How do you compromise Christ!—convictions that  
go back to the roots of your childhood? I hate soft-  
ness I don't believe in it My mother was soft it  
killed her I'm no Christian I don't believe in the  
other cheek I hate mushiness You ask me to com-  
promise for this kid? Who the hell is he? Now  
right now Lou I'm faced with a problem of my  
own that's ripping me up like a .22 bullet bouncing  
around inside and I can't compromise on that So  
what do I do? What do I do?

*A long pause* JOE *has entered quietly and has  
been standing in the doorway listening*

JOE Try picking up that phone and calling her  
MC LEOD Who?

JOE Mary *Tosses an aspirin box onto the desk*  
Here's your aspirin 60

MC LEOD What are you talking about?

JOE This .22 bullet of yours

MC LEOD You don't know anything about it

JOE It's one story I had in my pocket years before  
it happened

MC LEOD Listening at keyholes Yussel?

JOE No I'm prescient *Pause* I met Mary years  
before you did The spring of '41,—I was on the  
Newark *Star* She didn't remember me I never forgot  
her though It's one of those faces you don't forget  
She's one in a million your Mary I know She's a  
fine girl Serenus She could have had anything she  
wanted—materially—anything She chose you in-  
stead Why? What'd you have to offer her? Buttons!  
—These crazy hours this crazy life? She loves you  
You don't know how lucky you are I know I'm little  
and ugly—and because I'm a lover of beauty I'm  
going to live and die alone But you? The  
jewel was placed in your hands Don't throw it  
away You'll never get it back again! 70

*CALLAHAN re enters the squad room crossing to  
the files He pauses to light a cigarette*

BRODY *softly* You know what you were like be-  
fore you met Mary? You remember?

MC LEOD Yes

BRODY Like a stick!—Thin

MC LEOD *his voice hoarse with emotion* Yes

BRODY Died up lonely cold

MC LEOD Yes 90

BRODY And you know what tenderness and  
warmth she brought to your life?

MC LEOD I know I know better than you

BRODY So what the hell you asking me what to  
do? Pick up the phone! Get on your knees Crawl!

MARY *enters the squad room stands within the  
gate pale worn* CALLAHAN *clears his throat ap-  
proaches her adjusting his tie a little makey*

CALLAHAN Yesss Miss?

MARY Is Detective McLeod here? 100

CALLAHAN He's busy Miss

MARY *warily* It's Mrs Mrs McLeod

CALLAHAN Oh! Yes Ma'am I'll tell him you're  
here *Crosses Pokes his head into the* LIEUTENANT'S  
office to MC LEOD Your wife is out here MC LEOD  
*rises at once, comes out to MARY* JOE and BRODY  
*follow him out and discreetly vanish into the wash  
room*

MARY *digs into her purse to avoid his eyes Her  
voice is low and brittle* I'm leaving now, Jim I  
thought I'd come up and tell you Here are the keys 110

MC LEOD, *softly* Come inside

MARY My taxi's waiting

MC LEOD Send it away

MARY No My things are in it

MC LEOD What things?

MARY My valises and my trunk

MC LEOD Oh Mary, be sensible

MARY I intend to Let's not drag it out Jim! Please! I don't want any more arguments I can't stand them *Her voice becomes shrill* CALLAHAN *passes by She clamps the controls on becoming almost inaudible* It's only going to make things worse

10 MC LEOD Come inside! I can't talk to you here

MARY The meter's ticking

MC LEOD *firmly* Let it tick! Come! *She obeys follows him into the* LIEUTENANT'S *office He shuts the door turns to her* Mary this isn't the time or place to discuss our lives past present or future I want you to take your things and go home I'll be back at eight A.M. and we'll work this out then

MARY You think we can?

MC LEOD We'll have to

20 MARY I don't I don't think it's possible

MC LEOD Wait a minute! Wait one minute! I don't get this What are *you* so bitter about? Whose to blame for tonight? You put me in a cement mixer And now you're acting as if I were the

MARY The whore?

MC LEOD Don't say that!

MARY I didn't invent the word, either Jim

MC LEOD I wasn't myself

MARY You were never more yourself Jim *Pause*

30 MC LEOD I'm sorry Mary

MARY It's all right I'm beyond feeling I'm nice and numb

MC LEOD You're certainly in no condition to discuss this tonight

MARY I've thought everything over and over and over again and I don't see any other way Our life is finished We couldn't go on from here

MC LEOD You're married to me You can't just walk out Marriage is a sacrament Mary You don't dissolve it like that

40 MARY You once told me when you bring a married prostitute in here if she's convicted her marriage can be dissolved just like that! Well I've been brought in and I've been convicted

MC LEOD I don't like that talk Stop that talk, will you Mary? I'm trying, I'm trying

MARY To what?

MC LEOD To put all this behind me

MARY But you can't do it?

50 MC LEOD If you'll let me

MARY Me? What have I got to say about it? I know the way your mind works It never lets go The rest of our days we'll be living with this If you won't be saying it you'll be thinking it *Pause* It's no good It won't work I don't want to live a cat-and-dog existence I couldn't take it I'd dry up I'd dry up and die

MC LEOD Why didn't you ever tell me? If you'd come to me once just once

MARY How could I? What good would it have done? Would you have understood? Would you have been able to forgive me? 60

MC LEOD Wasn't I entitled to know?

MARY Yes yes!

MC LEOD Why didn't you tell me?

MARY Jim, I can't go over this again and again and again I refuse to

MC LEOD If I didn't love you and need you so, it'd be simple you understand?

MARY I understand

MC LEOD Simple You go home now and wait till morning 70

MARY That won't help us Please I'm so tired Let me go now Jim

MC LEOD To what? What'll you go to? You, who turn on every light in the house when I'm not there!

MARY Let me go Jim

MC LEOD You who can't fall asleep unless my arms are around you! Where will you go?

MARY Jim I beg you

MC LEOD No Mary I'm not going to *He grasps her by the arm* 80

MARY You're hurting my arm Jim!

MC LEOD I'm sorry I'm sorry *He lets her go*

MARY You ripped my sleeve

MC LEOD You'll sew it up

MARY The twins waiting Please Jim let me go without any more razor slashing I hate it

MC LEOD You'd go without a tear?

MARY I wouldn't say that One or two, perhaps I haven't many left 90

MC LEOD Mary I *CALLAHAN enters the LIEUTENANT'S office leaves paper on his desk and goes* Mary you just don't stop loving someone

MARY I wouldn't have thought so I wouldn't have believed it could happen But there it is I suppose in this life we all die many times before they finally bury us This was one of those deaths Sudden unexpected like being run over by a bus It happens

MC LEOD Who do you think you're kidding? 100

MARY No one! *Begins to cry* Least of all myself

MC LEOD *takes her in his arms* Mary I love you

MARY *clinging to him sobbing* Then help me! I'm trying to be a human being I'm trying to bundle myself together It took every bit of strength to go this far Help me Jim!

MC LEOD *caressing her* It's no use sweetheart it's no use I couldn't go home if you weren't waiting for me with the radio going and the smell of coffee on the stove I'd blow out my brains I would, Mary, if I went home to an empty flat—I wouldn't dare take my gun with me *He gives her his handkerchief* *She dries her eyes* Now powder your nose! Put on 110

some lipstick *She kisses him* SIMS *appears at the gate outside*

CALLAHAN *crosses to* SIMS Yes Counselor?

SIMS I want to see Detective McLeod

CALLAHAN All right Counselor Come in *Knocks on the door*

MC LEOD Come in!

CALLAHAN Someone outside to see you

MARY I'll go home, now

10 MC LEOD No Wait a minute

MARY *smiling now* That taxi bill is going to break us

MC LEOD, *grins back at her* Let it break us What do we care? *He goes out sees SIMS his face goes grim again* He *crosses to* SIMS You see Counselor? I told you your client was acting

SIMS He's still in shock

MC LEOD He'll be okay in the morning

10 SIMS No thanks to you When he's brought back here tomorrow though he'd better remain okay This is not to happen again! You're not to lay a finger on him If you do

MC LEOD Then advise him again to keep his mouth shut And see that he does

SIMS You're lucky you're not facing a murder charge yourself right now

MC LEOD I could always get you to defend me

SIMS And I probably would That's my job no matter how I feel personally

30 MC LEOD As long as you get your fee?

SIMS I've defended many men at my own expense

MC LEOD That was very noble of you

SIMS Nobility doesn't enter into it Every man has a right to counsel, no matter how guilty he might seem to you or to me for that matter Every man has a right not to be arbitrarily judged, particularly by men in authority not by you not by the Congress, not even by the President of the United States The theory being these human rights are

40 derived from God himself

MC LEOD I know the theory, Counselor

SIMS But you don't go along with it? Well you're not alone There are others You've a lot of friends all over the world Read the headlines But don't take it on yourself to settle it Let history do that

MC LEOD Give it for the Fourth of July Counselor

SIMS I'll save it for the Commissioner I intend to see him about you I'm not going to let you get away with this

50 MC LEOD As long as Schneider gets away with it, Counselor all's well Why do you take cases like this if you're so high-minded? Schneider killed the Harris girl—he's guilty You know it as well as I do

SIMS I don't know it I don't even permit myself to speculate on his guilt or innocence The moment I do that, I'm judging and it is not my job to

judge My job is to defend my client not to judge him That remains with the courts *He turns to go*

60 MC LEOD And you've got that taken care of Counselor Between bought witnesses and perjured testimony SIMS *stops in his tracks turns suddenly white with fury*

SIMS If you're so set on hanging Schneider why don't you ask Miss McLeod if she can supply a corroborating witness? MC LEOD *is stopped in turn as if he'd been hit by a meat axe* SIMS goes CHARLEY LEWIS and BARNES enter

BARNES Charley sit over there Over there for you Lewis

70 MC LEOD *looks a little sick* He lights a cigarette slowly He returns to the LIEUTENANT'S office his face twitching MARY *is just finishing powdering her face and removing the traces of the tears*

MARY What's the matter dear?

MC LEOD Nothing

MARY This has been our black day

MC LEOD Yes

MARY *puts her vanity case back into her bag* I'm sorry darling And yet, in a way I'm glad it's out in the open This has been hanging over my head so long I've had such a terrible feeling of guilt all the time

MC LEOD *mutters* All right! All right!

MARY *ignores the storm warnings* I needed help and there was no one I couldn't even go to my parents

MC LEOD They didn't know?

MARY No

MC LEOD You didn't tell them?

90 MARY I didn't dare I didn't want to hurt them You know how sweet and simple they are

MC LEOD You didn't go home then? After?

MARY No

MC LEOD *acidly* Where'd you go?

MARY That's when I came to New York

MC LEOD And how long was that before I met you, Mary?

MARY Two years

MC LEOD Who'd you go with, then?

MARY No one

MC LEOD How many others were there Mary?

MARY Others?

MC LEOD, *all control gone* How many other men?

MARY None *Alarmed now* What's the matter with you, Jim?

MC LEOD Wait a minute! Wait a minute! *He turns away trying to control the insane turbulence inside*

MARY No! What's the matter with you?

110 MC LEOD At an autopsy yesterday I watched the medical examiner saw off the top of a man's skull take out the brain and hold it in his hand (*he holds out his hand*) like that



MARY *horrified* Why are you telling me this?

MC LEOD Because I'd give everything I own to be able to take out my brain and hold it under the faucet and wash away the dirty pictures you put there tonight

MARY Dirty pictures?

MC LEOD Yes!

MARY Oh! I see *A long pause The brakes of a truck outside the window suddenly screech like a*  
 10 *horribly wounded living thing* I see *To herself* Yes That would be fine if we could *She straightens, turns to him wearily* But when you wash away what I may have put there you'll find you've a rotten spot in your brain, Jim, and it's growing I know I've watched it

MC LEOD, *hoarsely* Mary! That's enough

MARY *stronger than he at last* No let's have the truth! I could never find it in my heart to acknowledge one tiny flaw in you because I loved you so—  
 20 and God help me I still do—but let's have the truth, for once wherever it leads You think you're on the side of the angels? You're not! You haven't even a drop of ordinary human forgiveness in your whole nature You're a cruel and vengeful man You're everything you've always said you hated in your own father

MC LEOD *starts to throw on his jacket* I'm not going to let you wander off in the streets this way I'm going to take you home, myself

MARY What for? To kill me the way your father killed your mother! *His hands drop to his side He stares at her dumbly stricken She puts the keys down on the desk, turns to go*  
 30

MC LEOD Where are you going? *Pause She looks at him sadly*

MARY Far away you won't find me I'm scorching my earth burning my cities

MC LEOD When will I see you?

MARY Never Good bye *She goes*  
 40 MC LEOD *dazed walks slowly back to the squad room* BRODY *sees him from the wash room and enters with Joe*

BRODY How'd it go?

MC LEOD *almost inaudibly* Fine

BRODY I mean Mary

MC LEOD Fine Dandy *To SUSAN* All right, young lady, your two minutes are up

*The LIEUTENANT enters*

LIEUTENANT *to MC LEOD* What the hell's the matter with you?  
 50

MC LEOD Nothing

LIEUTENANT Don't you feel well?

MC LEOD Yes sir Feel all right

LIEUTENANT *to BRODY* Am I crazy? Look at him

BRODY You've gone all green Jim

MC LEOD I've got a headache

LIEUTENANT You better go home Buzz your doctor

MC LEOD I've got a squeal to finish off Lieutenant  
 60 ant

LIEUTENANT Brody! You finish it off

BRODY *reluctantly* Yes sir

MC LEOD I'd rather do it myself

LIEUTENANT You go home That's an order

MC LEOD Yes sir

LIEUTENANT Callahan! You catch for Jim tonight  
 CALLAHAN Yes sir *He crosses up to the duty chart takes it off the wall*

BRODY *to MC LEOD* What happened Jim? What's wrong?  
 70

MC LEOD *sits heavily* Mary left me Walked out We're finished

BRODY Too bad She'll come back

MC LEOD No This was for keeps

*The LIEUTENANT crosses*

LIEUTENANT What are you sitting there for? Why don't you go home? *Exit LIEUTENANT*

MC LEOD Because I haven't got any

JOE, *comes down to him* You drove her away didn't you? Why? MC LEOD *doesn't answer* I tried to wain you you damn fool Why?  
 80

MC LEOD I don't know Why? Why do we do these things Yussel? Who knows? I built my whole life on hating my father—and all the time he was inside me laughing—or maybe he was crving the poor bastard maybe he couldn't help himself either

*An excited woman enters, rattles the gate*

CALLAHAN Yes Miss? *He is at the desk now reaching into the bottom drawer for the celluloid letters to replace the name on the duty chart*  
 90

WOMAN Someone snatched my purse

CALLAHAN Come in Miss We'll take care of you *He bends over to pick up a letter*

WOMAN This happened to me once before on 72nd Street

CHARLEY *lunges for CALLAHAN'S exposed gun grabs it hits CALLAHAN on the head with the butt knocking him to the floor BARNES raises his club*  
 100

CHARLEY Drop that club! *He aims at BARNES*

BRODY Drop it! He's a four time loser He'll kill you BARNES *drops his club*

CHARLEY God damn right! Rot in jail the rest of my life? I take five or six a you bastards with me first BARNES *makes a movement*

BRODY Take it easy! He can't get by the desk

CHARLEY Shut up! One word! One move! Any body! MC LEOD, *seated center laughs softly*

MC LEOD I was wondering when you'd get around to it Charley  
 110

CHARLEY None of your guff, you!

MC LEOD *rises* Give me that gun!

CHARLEY In the gut you'll get it One step! I'm wainin' you One!

BRODY Easy Jim He can't get by the desk

MC LEOD *lunges for the gun* You evil son-of-a-bitch!

CHARLEY *fires point blank at MC LEOD One two three quick shots MC LEOD is hurled back and whirled around by the impact BARNES goes into action knocks the gun out of CHARLEY'S hand and starts beating him over the head with his billy Several of the others rush in and swarm all over CHARLEY He screams twice and is silent MC LEOD staggers clutching his stomach*

BRODY *rushes to him puts his arms around him supporting him* Jim! Did he get you? Are you hurt?

MC LEOD Slightly *He unbuttons his coat His shirt is a bloody rag The sight stuns and sickens him God! A little boy for one second Oh Mary Mary Mary He wraps the coat tightly about him as if to shut in the escaping stream of life He looks up smiles crookedly Slightly killed I should say*

*The LIEUTENANT comes running in a number of policemen crowd in through the gate*

LIEUTENANT What's happened?

BARNES That son of a bitch shot Jim!

LIEUTENANT Take him inside! Get him into bed quick

BRODY to MC LEOD Easy baby Come, I'll carry you to bed

MC LEOD Wait a minute

BRODY Now Jim

MC LEOD No don't! Don't pull at me *He sinks back into a chair*

JOE You got to lie down Seamus

MC LEOD No Once I lie down I'm not going to get up again No

LIEUTENANT Notify the Communication Bureau! Get an ambulance Quick!

MC LEOD Never mind the doctor Get a priest

BRODY Feel that bad, Jim?

GALLAGHER *goes to the phone*

LIEUTENANT *on the phone* Communication Bureau

LIEUTENANT Why don't you lie down, Jim?

MC LEOD Get me a drink *He gasps unable to speak BRODY starts for the water cooler*

LIEUTENANT *whispers to BRODY* With a belly wound ?

BRODY *whispers* What difference does it make ? Look at him!

MC LEOD Don't whisper, Lou I can hear you

*The LIEUTENANT goes for glass of water*

BRODY Sure you can You're all right baby They can't hurt you You're one of the indestructibles you're immortal, baby

MC LEOD Almost Lou almost Don't rush me Give me your hand, Lou Squeeze! Harder!

SUSAN *begins to sob*

ARTHUR Don't cry Suzy Don't cry!

MC LEOD *glances up at ARTHUR studies him turns to BRODY* Give me Buster's prints! I don't know I hope you're right Lou Maybe he'll come in tomorrow with a murder rap I don't know any more Get me his prints BRODY *goes for them CHARLEY is dragged off half unconscious moaning*

JOE How're you feeling Seamus?

MC LEOD Yussel! Find her! Ask her to forgive me And help her She needs help will you?

JOE Sure Now take it easy

BRODY *hands ARTHUR'S fingerprint sheet to MC LEOD*

MC LEOD Tear it up! BRODY *tears it* Unchain him Lou The keys are in my pocket We have no case here Lieutenant The complainant withdrew *He crosses himself* In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost Oh my God I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of Heaven *He falls BRODY catches him eases him to the ground feels for his pulse JOE kneels to help him After an interminable pause*

BRODY He's gone!

JOE He's dead

LIEUTENANT, *completes the Act of Contrition* I firmly resolve with the help of Thy Grace to confess my sins to do penance and to amend my life Amen *Crosses himself*

BRODY *murmurs* Amen BARNES *uncovers crosses himself BRODY crosses himself rises clumsily goes to ARTHUR unlocks his handcuffs All right son Go on home! Don't make a monkey outa me! If I see you (BRODY is crying now) up here again, I'll kick the guts outa you Don't make a monkey outa me!*

ARTHUR Don't worry! I won't

SUSAN He won't

BRODY Now get the hell outa here! SUSAN *takes ARTHUR'S hand They go At the door ARTHUR pauses to look back BRODY has turned to watch him go They exchange glances*

GALLAGHER *on the phone* St Vincent's? Will you please send a priest over to the 21st Precinct Police Station to administer last rites?

LIEUTENANT *on the phone* Communication Bureau? Notify the Commissioner, the D.A. the homicide squad 21st Precinct Detective shot killed

BRODY *his face twisted glances down at MC LEOD JOE rises slowly taking off his hat*

CURTAIN

## STUDY QUESTIONS

As we leave the theatre still shaken by McLeod's death with perhaps the suspicion of a tear in our eyes we begin to ask questions about the play for the pleasure in a play



the moment before the actors begin to speak the set has made its impression on you you know what kind of place you are in, you know what time of the day or night it is, from the furnishings and clothes of the actors you know whether the time of the action is contemporary with us or not and what class of people you are going to live with for the next two and a half hours in short the set gives the play its pitch it determines its mood as realistic or poetic or whatever setting the playwright has called for The actors too as they stand waiting to speak add to the general impression made by the set for the director, having read the author's descriptions of the characters and knowing intimately the play in all its aspects has tried to cast those actors whose physical appearance fits as closely as possible the author's descriptions Note for example, the descriptions of Detective Dakis and the shoplifter for although you do not read these descriptions when you are in the theatre you see them realized for you on the stage in the persons and personalities of the actors

The play begins Now you know nothing of the people before you on the stage except for their clothes, their looks and the circumstances they happen to be in at the moment you can learn what they are like only from what they say and do In the drama you learn from dialogue and action the author communicates with you through the eye and the ear he cannot describe narrate philosophize, poetize except in terms of what the characters say and do Action and dialogue, then are the media of the drama *Detective Story* begins on a minor note a shoplifter is being booked in a police station, life in a police station is being put in motion the mood and tone of the play are getting set Some crude jokes are made an Irish cop sings an Italian aria, a pathetic shoplifter is questioned the play comes to life Note how the minor characters are established and distinguished from each other the clothes they affect the way they speak the kind of jokes they make—one dominant trait only just enough to enable us to identify them as individuals different from each other, nothing more—almost the technique of caricature The first serious note is struck when Gallagher says Uh uh! Here comes trouble Look at the calendar it never fails But this piece of dramatic foreshadowing is deliberately dropped lest the tension of the play mount too quickly instead there is the episode with Mrs Faragut, which is designed to gain our sympathy for the police Joe, the police reporter says You give the customers a good massage In other words Joe underlines the author's point and throughout the play he serves this function as commentator on the action he is the author's mouthpiece the chorus of Greek tragedy reduced to a five foot man

With the entrance of Sims the attorney the at

mosphere changes we feel that the serious business of the play is about to begin And almost immediately thereafter his opponent the protagonist of the play McLeod enters, with a prisoner in tow a symbolic act How do we know that in the person of McLeod we have the protagonist of the play? Simple we know Ralph Bellamy is the star and the star takes the chief role in the play we know this as the Elizabethan audience knew that when Burbage appeared as Hamlet Hamlet was therefore the most important character in the play Sims has already expressed his judgment of McLeod and given one dimension of McLeod's character A law unto himself From now on each succeeding situation adds yet another dimension of McLeod's character or deepens one already there We see him from a number of different points of view from that of his immediate superior from that of his partner, from that of his wife, from that of his enemies from that of his prisoners from his own point of view and from the point of view of the spectators, seated in the audience Before we can say that we understand a character on the stage, therefore we must take into account the various angles of approach by which he has been presented to us his own view of himself the attitudes taken by others toward him and what we ourselves know from having observed them all One of the most intriguing aspects of *Othello* is the play between these points of view What Iago really thinks of himself as presented to us in his soliloquies what others think of him as presented in his relations to them and what we in the fullness of our knowledge know of him but are powerless to tell the others on the stage that we do know

With the entrance of McLeod the play picks up speed his driving character forces the play along He antagonizes Sims he bullies Arthur he expresses his hatred of the criminal You're degenerating into a real sob sister, Yussel Grimm gray prison walls! At the same time the opposite side of his character is quickly revealed to us by the tone he takes toward his wife when he calls her up—warmth tenderness understanding Thus, in the space of a few lines the author has created a character with two basic drives two opposing impulses which we know must sooner or later come into conflict with each other, and the resolution of these motivations will be the resolution of the play as a whole The bitter side of McLeod's character is now elaborated in his exchange with Sims Counselor, I never met a criminal yet who didn't wrap himself in the Constitution from head to toe or a hoodlum who wasn't filled to the nostrils with habeas corpus and the rights of human dignity Sims replies with the opposing point of view Are you qualified to speak for it? and the issue between them is drawn the believer in justice who in his anxiety for justice takes

justice into his own hands and the man who defends himself by the law in order to subvert the law. Even at this early stage we begin to foresee the probable consequences of this conflict for one of the pleasures of attending a play is to look forward on the basis of the hints thrown out to us by the author, to the outcome of the piece we want our expectations realized but we do not know in exactly what form they will come. Suspense is therefore a result of knowing and yet not knowing. The dramatic foreshadowing is now made a bit more explicit when Sims says. At considerable expense we have investigated and discovered *otherwise*. McLeod is puzzled and so are we. We wonder if there is not more here than meets the eye and our interest is strongly aroused. McLeod turns his attention to Arthur. The story of Arthur is a subplot in the play; it serves a double function by adding interest through the variety of incident it brings and by establishing further aspects of McLeod's character.

The bitter exchange between McLeod and Arthur is deliberately turned aside lest it go too far and spoil the dynamics of the action. The author wishes to bring us along by degrees of tension; a small climax is reached and then we drop back for a momentary relief in humor; then another climax, this more intense, followed by another drop in tension but not as long as the other; then another climax, now faster and harder and less cushioned until we are brought up to the very climax of the play itself. Without this careful plotting of climaxes we should soon be emotionally exhausted and incapable of maintaining our interest at the highest pitch when it is needed most. So the author introduces the comic incident of the reporter fixing a ticket for a cop and gives him an opportunity to restate the theme of the play. That way nobody gets too big for his britches. That's democracy! The second subplot is now introduced. Although the first subplot is intended to advance our understanding of McLeod's character, the second is intended to advance the action of the play. In time the three lines of action—that of the main plot connected with Sims and Kurt and that of the two subplots, all of which are now moving separately from each other though each is connected with McLeod—will meet and when they do the climax of the play as action will have been reached. McLeod's reactions to the two professional criminals underline his hardness of heart toward all criminals; he is incapable of distinguishing between them and a decent man like Arthur; his blind arrogance, his pride in his own judgment are brought to the fore. Note the incident of the error made by Callahan; later the repetition of this error will cost McLeod his life. We have in this way been prepared for the action of the climax of the play.

With the entrance of the Lieutenant, all the lines

of action are placed in his hands; his position gives him control over all the people involved in the play and he therefore serves as a binding force on the action. He too, voices his condemnation of McLeod.

You want to be judge and jury too. This point of view is restated in another way. McLeod to Joe:

Why don't you print the truth for once, Yussel? Joe: Which truth?—Yours, his, theirs, mine? The truth, Joe. Oh, that one? Who would know it? Meanwhile we see the contrast in treatment of Kurt by McLeod and of Arthur by Brody: implacable judgment in the one, sympathy and understanding in the other. Kurt repeats the warning to McLeod:

I know you're out to get me. Then his failure to force the truth out of Kurt, the refusal of the biased Miss Hatch to pick Kurt out of the line up, and the death of Miss Harris, all combine to embitter the already embittered McLeod. All this work these hours! What for? It's a phony. And he makes a fatal step forward. Your democracy, Yussel, is a Rube Goldberg contraption. He refuses to admit Joe's defense; rather, he reiterates his position:

You can judge. But just as his pride seems too overweening to bear, he tries to explain himself.

Every time I look at one of these babies I see my father's face! Thus we are given his psychological motivation and we ask ourselves: is this an explanation or a justification? Then twice more Kurt throws out hints to him and McLeod, losing his temper, knocks Kurt down. In his anguish, Kurt blurts out the name of Tamí Giacoppetti. A new factor has been dramatically introduced and, as the Lieutenant orders: Find him and bring him in! the curtain falls on the end of Act I.

Thus, by the end of the first act, we have been introduced to the scene of the play, savored more than a bit of its flavor, have met all but one of the major characters in the play, have seen the action get under way and have been presented with the problems of human conduct which the play poses, all of which we think—or ought to think—about as we have a between-the-acts cigarette.

Once back in our seat for Act II, we realize our tensions have been lowered in the interval, and the author shrewdly knowing this, starts the second act quietly enough but begins to push the action of the play along more swiftly. After all, he has no need in this act for the exposition of the time, place, and characters which took up so much of the first act. Here his main purpose is to get into rapid movement the forces which he had set in motion in Act I. The note of mystery with which Act I ended is taken up again at the beginning of Act II. Lieutenant: Mystery! Mystery! What motives? And again, the conflict between McLeod and Sims is resumed. Sims to McLeod: The public isn't your servant, you're theirs. The Lieutenant worms out of Sims

the fact that McLeod's wife is in some way connected with Kuit's case but lest this new development occupy our full attention too soon several humorous incidents are brought in to release the tension to cover the Lieutenant's call to Mrs McLeod. Unaware of the tangle of circumstances in which he is getting more and more involved McLeod continues his persecution of Arthur. He's no good. Believe me I know! Ironically at this very moment Mrs McLeod is being brought in and in the interview with the Lieutenant the sad truth comes out. Meanwhile note the little episode in which Charley edges toward Callahan's gun: this is the second time we have been prepared for the action of the final scene. And while McLeod's wife is telling her story McLeod himself ignorant of his own misfortunes to come becomes harder and harder the analogy he makes between the public as civilians and the police as the army now reveals the fascist in his mentality. Joe in his role as commentator chorus says to McLeod:

Humble yourself sweetheart humble yourself! Seamus Seamus why must you always make everything so black and white? Remember we're all of us falling down all the time. Don't be so intolerant. Listen to me Seamus. Listen! I love you and I'm trying to warn you. You're digging your own grave. A bottomless pit baby. It's right there in front of you. One more step and you're in. Humble yourself sweetheart humble yourself!

McLeod ignores the warning and goes inexorably to his doom. He hears his wife's story from her own lips: she begs for understanding not judgment but unable to realize that he too has tried to explain himself he grinds her down. Everything I hate even murder. What the hell's left to understand!

Though the second act is as long as the first it is less varied in its incidents: it drives along with ever increasing speed. The sense of mystery with which Act I ended has been replaced by the sense of doom at the end of Act II.

The tension with which Act II ended is relieved at the opening of Act III by the business of the photographer but is also maintained by the report of the jumper on McLeod's street. The cases of the shoplifter Arthur and the two burglars are being rapidly wound up: note the touch of sympathy given to the shoplifter in her speech. 'As if I didn't want to get married Arthur and Susan solve their problem. When he tells her, This isn't a time for study and teachers this is a time for generals she replies.

I hate that kind of talk Jiggs. Everywhere I hear it. I don't believe it—we are reminded by contrast of McLeod's analogy in Act II. Brody pleads with McLeod to release Arthur. To hell with logic

I seen you logic the life out of a thing. Heart! Heart! The world's crying for a little heart. What do you say? McLeod refuses and justifies himself. I'm here out of principle! Principle Lou. All my life I've lived according to principle! And God damn it I couldn't deviate even if I wanted to. Brody makes one more last plea: a plea reminiscent of Joe's abjuration to McLeod to humble himself. Sometimes you gotta bend with the wind or break! But McLeod cannot compromise. Crawl! Brody tells him and he cannot. Yet Mary comes back and she and McLeod seem to effect a reconciliation but the reconciliation is broken by McLeod whose anger at Sins pours over on to Mary: it is too late. She tells him: You'll find you've a rotten spot in your brain.

You haven't a drop of ordinary human forgiveness in your whole nature. You're a cruel and vengeful man. And the crowning irony of all. You're everything you've always said you hated in your own father. She leaves and now McLeod at last humbles himself. I built my whole life on hating my father—and all the time he was inside me laughing—or maybe he was crying the poor bastard maybe he couldn't help himself either. Just then Charley snatches the gun from Callahan. McLeod goes for him: is mortally wounded and with his dying breath, orders Arthur freed. I don't know any more. We have no case here Lieutenant. He dies and the curtain comes down on the end of the play.



## Some Elements of Tragedy

Let us now examine the three tragedies we have reprinted here: namely *Detective Story*, *Oedipus Rex* and *Othello* in the light of our discussion of the elements of the drama and in an effort to reach some understanding of what tragedy is—that is to say what ends it aims at by what means it achieves them and with what results. Our purpose is to call attention to some of the leading motifs of tragedy and to suggest some ways of recognizing them and of understanding them in the discharge of their proper functions in tragedy. But at best we can provide only some rather rough-hewn signposts, the experience of tragedy is in the play itself.

For the sake of convenience, we will start with

the characters of the protagonists and conclude with the significance of the action those differences which arise as a consequence of differences in stagecraft can be deduced from the suggestions given in the essay on some elements of the drama. We have then, in the three tragedies these protagonists: McLeod, Oedipus and Othello. How do they differ from each other and in what respects are they alike? They differ, first, as to their status in society. Oedipus is a king, Othello of royal blood himself is the indispensable general of a victorious army, and McLeod is a detective, a civil servant employed by the City of New York. The aesthetic consequences of these differences are considerable. Both Oedipus and Othello appear to us as larger than life size, and McLeod is of our time, place and station. Because of the distance of time, place, station and circumstances which separate them from us, Oedipus and Othello possess the great advantage of appealing to us to be cast in the heroic mold. Their speech, actions and passions are all on the grand scale, and their fall from the high places they occupy, high both socially and emotionally, is therefore to us so much more shattering than that of McLeod who is at the disadvantage of being too close to us and too much like us. The fall of a prince cannot but be exciting, the murder of a police man in the course of duty is not unexpected. It is difficult for the contemporary to be clothed in the nimbus of the romantic, one needs distance created by the strange or the unfamiliar for the tragic protagonist to be seen in his proper stature.

Nevertheless we must realize that in relation to Oedipus, Othello possessed the same disadvantage as does McLeod in relation to him. Oedipus comes out of the dark and moving myths of the Greeks out of the primordial womb of experience: he is a king and the son of a king; he is the plaything of the gods themselves. Othello on the other hand is derived from a rather poorish tale by the Italian novelist Cinthio who presents him as a credulous dupe. Yet Shakespeare has endowed him with greatness of stature and of soul: the magic of poetry has cast the spell of romance over him, and we expect from so great a man great passions and great deeds. McLeod is not an ordinary man but he is a common man, and the common man we know quite well. He is our neighbor and if he suffers, we help him; but we are not shaken in our souls and we certainly cannot persuade ourselves that his domestic difficulties can possibly be tragic. Again Oedipus comes out of the heart stream of Greek religious conviction, the play itself was an important part of the religious ceremony, and the audience saw the play and responded to it in what can be best described as a mood of religious exaltation. Tragedy was art but it was also religion, it was art and religion intertwined. Conversely the Elizabethan audience very likely did

not know Cinthio's tale nor did it care very much from what sources Shakespeare cribbed his plots, it wanted action and passion, laughter and tears, and these Shakespeare supplied in good measure. At the same time, Shakespeare and his audience possessed enough religion in common—and that religion was still strong enough to overlay their aesthetic experiences with moral colors—that then drama had, if not a religious effect then certainly an ethical effect. But the religious element is missing from *Detective Story*. The contemporary audience is too mixed in its religious professions or has none at all for contemporary tragedy to be able to secure religious or ethical effects. Nevertheless, tragedy requires a backbone of faith to sustain it, it assumes a set of values against which the drama is played and there must be some community of faith between the playwright and his audience, some meeting point of belief. In the case of *Detective Story* Kingsley's values may be designated as humanistic: that is they are moral but without a specific religious conviction behind them, and the play loses force to precisely the degree that the contemporary audience lacks moral fervor.

These differences, however, are not as significant as are the similarities. When we come to examine the characters and motivations of the protagonists we see that they go through very much the same vicissitudes, suffer from very much the same flaw in character, come to very much the same sort of end, and create very much the same sort of tragic effect on us. Each pursues his particular version of justice that is each sees justice without humanity, each assumes that he alone is capable of attaining that justice in his own way: that is, by a blind drive ahead with an utter disregard of the warnings of others, the counsel of reason, and the appeals of decency, each is cursed and crushed by the sin of pride. Oedipus stubbornly seeks the murderer of his father though the gods themselves have warned him off; Othello stubbornly insists on seeing his wife not as the warm human being that she is but as an abstract ideal beyond the reach of possible human attainment and just as stubbornly converts her into a devil when that ideal is called in question. McLeod stubbornly tracks down the criminal in pursuit of a legalistic justice which blinds him to the differences in character between individual men and squeezes every vestige of humanity out of him.

Let us now consider the antagonists in these tragedies. When we come to set them down by name we note with surprise that with the exception of Iago there is no clearly defined antagonist in the other tragedies. To be sure we may think of Sims and Schneider as the opponents of McLeod in *Detective Story* and of Teresias as the opponent of Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex*, but we soon realize that they do not



represent the equal and opposite force which we should expect of the antagonist and which we do get so terrifyingly with Iago in *Othello*. We are therefore forced to the conclusion that the antagonist in tragedy is in fact the complement to the protagonist: he symbolizes the flaw in the protagonist's character; he is the concrete embodiment of the evil in the protagonist which must be purged. If we should consider Iago in this light, it will then be possible to understand more exactly his function in the play. Just as Othello overvalues the ideal, so does Iago undervalue it; if Othello is all passion run wild, Iago is all intellect run wild, each by himself is a man warped by his own limitations. Now when we purge each of his own excess and redress the balance of opposites, the result is a picture of man as he ought to be: of passion held in check by intellect, of intellect warmed by passion, and this is indeed the man that Othello becomes at the end of the play. His passion spent, his reason restored, Othello regains his humanity and his compassion, and in a similar though smaller way this is what happens to McLeod. This is the redemptive action of the play, and if we should ask why the balance is not restored in the case of Iago, we must answer that the good which was in Othello to start with, and which in the end triumphantly emerges after having been so tragically bottled up, is not even in Iago: for him there is only the cold of silence.

The concept of the complementary nature of the protagonist-antagonist relationship may help us to understand *Oedipus Rex*, since for the modern reader the play is not easy to accept. He decrees his own fate, and in seeking the murderer of his father, he was only doing the right thing. However, this is not how the Greeks saw the play: what they saw was that Oedipus was deliberately transgressing the will of the gods. Back of the play there hung, so to speak, a backdrop of religious values: the acceptance of the justice of the gods. But this justice is seen when the play opens, as something arbitrary and inscrutable: it maintains its hold by fear, not by love. Oedipus challenges that justice, and because of his temerity he falls; yet, because of that fall, we who have vicariously participated in the *hybris* of Oedipus are vicariously purged of it, and we see now that that justice—far from being arbitrary and inscrutable as we had mistakenly thought—is in fact founded on reason and right. The fall has revealed the just order of the gods; it has cleansed us of our pride (symbolized in Oedipus) and has redressed the balance between gods and men. In effect, the real protagonist of the play is not Oedipus but the order of justice of the gods which Oedipus challenges, and by so doing enables both gods and men to rise to a new level of mutual understanding. If we consider *Detective Story* and *Othello* in the same way but with

out the religious overtones of *Oedipus Rex*, we find the same transformation has been brought about: men are raised to a new level of mutual understanding.

This then is the effect of tragedy: the effect of resolution. As a result of the conflict between the opposing forces in the drama, a new balance of forces is created. The evil in the protagonist has been purged; he learns through suffering, and we, because of our identification with him, learn too. But we learn without being hurt: we are after all in the theatre, and what we have seen on the stage is a representation, a *mimesis*, a play in all the senses of the word. In other words, we have acted out our evil and having brought it to the surface, we have rid ourselves of it: this is the fundamental meaning of *catharsis*. Tragedy cannot occur in a moral vacuum; it requires on the part of both the playwright and the audience values in which both believe, values which can stand the test of a challenge by evil and can emerge from the contest more sustained than ever. The roots of tragedy lie fixed in religion; however far these roots may extend and wherever they may go. But we must not take religion in its narrow and parochial sense. In tragedy, religion means more than humanity; it means that in a universe of chaos, uncertainty, and evil, man can, by being man, create a world of order, harmony, and good. This can be done only by paying the price in suffering, but to pay less, to seek a bargain, is to be less than man. Tragedy forces man to face up to evil, and by facing it to conquer it; this is the action of tragedy.



## The Tragic Vision

*Stanley Hyman*

Stanley Edgar Hyman is one of the most perceptive and provocative of our younger critics. Fortified by immense learning, buttressed by a fantastic zeal for accuracy and completeness, and lightened by a sharp wit which guides a sharp pen, he has stormed through the pages of the leading critical quarterlies assailing—and getting away with it—some of the most venerable critical names. He himself is an exponent of the myth and ritual approach to literature, which he defends on all sides against all opponents, and very rarely has he come back on his shield. *The Tragic Vision* was commissioned by *The Saturday Evening Post* as the 29th of its *Adventures of the Mind* Series and appeared June 13, 1959. It is a

serious and persuasive explanation of an approach to literature which is as yet a minority point of view but one which is steadily gaining in strength Professor Hyman teaches English at Bennington College and is married to that novelist of the eerie Shirley Jackson. He is at present working on a ritual interpretation of Marx, Darwin and Frazer.

A GREAT financier sits in the Chicago courtroom his face haggard. He is bankrupt, and worse, exposed to the world as a criminal. A short while ago he stepped out of his limousine like a king emerging from the royal coach, soon he will be doing all his stepping in the prison yard. In Hollywood, an old actor the matinee idol and foremost lecher of his time now hopelessly alcoholic ends his days friendless in a shabby rooming house. A few blocks from Madison Square Garden in New York, a punch-drunk fighter once the most arrogant of champions, begs from saloon to saloon.

These falls from great heights engage our emotions peculiarly. More than fifteen hundred years ago Saint Augustine raised the question of that peculiarity. What is the reason he asks in his *Confessions* that a spectator desires to be made sad when he beholds doleful and tragical passages which he himself could not suffer to endure? That is still the important question about tragedy. Why do we enjoy the portrayal of suffering? Trying to answer it we have to look back at the history of tragic drama, watch tragedy spread into other forms then take note of whatever special sorts of tragedy we might have today in a best-selling novel or a political downfall. Our values and literary styles are as far from those of ancient Athens and Elizabethan England as neckties are from Spanish ruffs or atom bombs from Greek fire. Our tragedies however, would be as understandable to them as their Oedipus and Hamlet are to us. There seems to be something about the tragic vision, some essential affirmation of the human spirit, that remains timeless and universal however much its superficial appearance changes.

The ancient Greeks might be said to have invented tragedy as they invented so much of our culture although there are anticipations of it in the earlier literature of the ancient Near East. The story of Saul and what the Lord calls his bloody house in the books of Samuel in the Bible looks very like tragic drama as do the fates of David's descendants in the books of Kings. Even earlier in the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh we hear the authentic voice of tragedy in Gilgamesh's awful mourning for his dead companion Enkidu—as moving in its way as the lament of David for Absalom. Behind that there are still earlier Sumerian and Akkadian related epics taking us almost back to the beginnings of history.

Nevertheless, the earliest tragic drama we have whatever its sources flowers suddenly in Athens in the fifth century B.C., in the marvelous plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. A century later Aristotle codified its principles in his *Poetics*, and that fragmentary treatise may still be the best insight we have into the art. Aristotle defined tragedy as the imitation or representation of an action serious complete in itself and of an adequate magnitude, written in embellished language. In that action a man like ourselves, neither wholly good nor wholly bad, is brought low through some shortcoming or tragic flaw in him. Its function is the arousing of pity for him and terror of his fate in the audience, and the purging of these emotions in the resolution.

Aristotle based his definitions principally on Sophocles' Oedipus the King which he thought the greatest and most successful of Greek tragedies as many others have since. Unfortunately, Aristotle's definitions do not fit other Athenian tragedies as neatly. The protagonist of Euripides' Medea is not a flawed man like ourselves, but a remorseless semi-divine witch, and she is not brought low at the end but appears in glory in the sky. The protagonist of Sophocles' Antigone does not bring on her tragic fate through any shortcoming but because of her pious determination to give her brother proper burial although the tyrant Creon had forbidden it, and Orestes in the Oresteia of Aeschylus kills his mother not because he has a tragic flaw but because the god Apollo had commanded him to avenge her murder of his father. We can only accept Medea as a tragedy in the later concepts of Longinus' treatise, *On the Sublime*, written in the third century A.D. which puts a new emphasis on such features of the tragic experience as nobility, grandeur, transport, inspired and vehement passion. Only in the nineteenth century, with Hegel's concept of tragedy as brought about through inability to obey two contradictory imperatives, does the tragic nature of the Antigone and Oresteia begin to make sense for us.

From the work of classical scholars like Gilbert Murray at Oxford and Jane Harrison at Cambridge we have learned that the form of Greek tragedy which began as the sacrificial rites of the god Dionysus, preserves the stages of the annual sacrifice of the year spirit, his contest with his enemy, his suffering, death and tearing apart, the lamentation for him, then the discovery of his body and its resurrection as the new year. These rites mimic and thus magically produce the annual cycle of vegetation: birth, growth, flourishing, decay, death, rebirth. Its culmination in nature is the joy of spring. The comparable affirmation in Greek drama heralds the Re-living Dionysus, who will spring up again from his dismembered fragments, and the final mood of Greek

tragedy thus goes beyond pity and terror to exultation and joy

The Greeks saw this tragic pattern, some higher and implicit in human suffering, not only on the stage but everywhere in their experience. Homeric epic is full of it. In the *Iliad* Homer gets the whole of tragic acceptance into Achilles' fierce speech to the young Trojan Lycaon who has begged him for mercy just before he kills him. I quote from W. H. D. Rouse's translation:

Come my friend die too why do you cry like that? Patroclus died too and he was a much better man than you. Don't you see me too a fine big man? My father is a brave man my mother is a goddess yet I too have death and fate fast upon me. The day shall come morning or evening or midday when someone shall take my life too in battle with a thrust of the spear or an arrow from the bow.

In the *Odyssey*—perhaps the finest tragedy of all and one of Longinus' examples of the sublime—is the disdainful silence of the ghost of Ajax when Odysseus meets him in Hades still implacable over the wrong Odysseus did him in life. Here in Ajax's simple gesture of turning away in bitter silence, we learn more powerfully than any words could tell us that the human spirit is stronger than death.

There is always a danger in quoting what Matthew Arnold called touchstones out of context since the whole of a work is what produces its effect, not a moving scene, speech or line. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are not tragic dramas but the tragic vision—that man must go down into the depths of the human condition that he must fall before he can rise is strong within them. We find the same vision in Greek lyric poetry and philosophy most dramatically in the death of Socrates in Plato's *Phaedo*. In Greek history we have the Athenian historian Thucydides showing bitterly that when Athens arrogant in its power destroyed the weak and inoffensive little city of Melos, killing the men and enslaving the women and children, its subsequent fall was divine punishment for pride and transgression just like that of a tragic hero, and it could only arise again humbled and transformed. Some modern thinkers have even found the pattern of tragedy underlying the origin of scientific thought among the Greeks. Alfred North Whitehead says that the basic scientific assumption of an order of nature comes from Greek tragedy so that 'The laws of physics are the decrees of fate.' In his brilliant book *Poetry and Mathematics* Scott Buchanan suggests that the experimental method itself perhaps even the basic patterns of our thinking, come from the rites of contest, tearing apart and apotheosis that underlie Greek tragedy.

Modern tragic drama begins with Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. In the last scene as

Lucifer and Mephistophilis come to get him Faustus cries out:

*Oh I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?*

*See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!*

*One drop would save my soul—half a drop ah, my Christ!*

With this cry from the heart as damnation closes in on him Faustus suddenly becomes not a cardboard necromancer but a man like ourselves and the vigor of the emotion pulls apart Marlowe's singsong blank verse line and makes Shakespearean tragedy possible. Marlowe himself killed young in a tavern brawl, is a sacrificial figure like his Faustus and out of his ashes arise the glories of the Elizabethan theater.

Shakespeare extends all of Marlowe's possibilities further—perhaps to their limits—and without knowing Aristotle's writing succeeds in producing tragedies that fit the formula of the *Poetics* better than most Greek drama. *Macbeth* and *Othello*, *Hamlet* and *Lear* are precisely men like ourselves, neither wholly good nor wholly bad, brought low by a tragic shortcoming: *Macbeth's* ambition, *Othello's* credulity, *Hamlet's* indecision, and *Lear's* blind inability to tell love from its counterfeit.

Shakespeare increases our ability to identify with the tragic action by weakening or discarding the supernatural motivation so strong in *Doctor Faustus*. The witches in *Macbeth* and the ghost in *Hamlet* are only trappings, the external forms of inner voices and *Othello* and *Lear* battle not supernatural beings but malign human antagonists: Iago and the wicked daughters.

After Shakespeare tragic drama in English runs downhill, turning into wilder and wilder bloody melodrama in the seventeenth century, becoming neoclassical and rather stiff in the joints in the eighteenth century and leaving the theater entirely in the nineteenth century to become the unperformable closet dramas of poets. When tragedy is revived in our theater the impetus comes from abroad from Henrik Ibsen in Norway and Anton Chekhov in Russia. Here we have the new realistic tragedy of the middle class with scenes in parlors rather than on battlements or blasted heaths. Again as with the Greeks, we have no villains, only the protagonists' own crippling failures of insight, will and love. Sometimes in Chekhov there is no crack of doom at all, only a fog of gloom and inertia settling over a household as oxidation is sometimes the vivid flash of fire and sometimes the slow corruption of rust. Whatever rebirth is promised here will not spring up like Dionysus from the dismembered flesh but will be a new growth, a better cherry orchard perhaps, out of decay.

With the Irish theater of John M. Synge and Sean O'Casey we are back to something like Greek drama, with destiny again working its remorseless ways. Now however instead of a Greek chorus we have two vulgar old women, a fruit peddler and a char-lady foretelling the fates in *The Plough and the Stars*, we must accept as men like ourselves not Prince Hamlet or King Lear but those sodden frauds Joxer Daly and Captain Boyle in *Juno and the Paycock* and in *Riders to the Sea* instead of proud Queen Hecuba of Troy we have the peasant woman Mauiya—whose name sounds so much like the Greek *Moirai* Fate—giving us the ultimate Greek tragic acceptance after her last son has been drowned. No man at all can be living forever, and we must be satisfied.

In the tragic drama of our own time the playwrights seem to be still consolidating the revolution of Ibsen, Chekhov and the Irish dramatists reshaping the tragic vision to fit a world of new classes and values, a world with neither villains nor heroes, a world that has lost much of its faith and most of its hope. Perhaps least typical of our time is T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, a frankly religious work written to be performed in church yet a tragic drama all the same. Here telling the story of the martyrdom of St. Thomas a Becket in the twelfth century, Eliot finds tragedy in the vision of man as a flawed agency of divine purpose.

Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* is a much more characteristic tragedy of our time in that it denies the existence of divine purpose, or any purpose and shatters its characters, the derelicts of Harry Hope's saloon, with the discovery that all faith is a lying pipe dream. Theodore Hickman, the salesman who sells them this discovery, is the Iceman of the title, a salesman of death, and when he is taken away by the police at the end their shabby and pathetic hopes spring up again like some kind of unkillable life.

Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* takes a well-born lady with the passions of Queen Phaedra in Euripides' *Hippolytus* on that streetcar ride into the slums of New Orleans and through them into disgrace and madness. Like the inhabitants of Harry Hope's saloon, Blanche DuBois has her pipe dreams—the plantation she grew up in is called *Belle Reve*, beautiful dream. When she and her dreams are smashed at the end in a scene of magnificent theatrical hokum, the hope may be for her sister's child by the coarse, animal Stanley Kowalski, growing up free of all such dreams.

If Blanche DuBois is like Queen Phaedra, driven by the arrows of the love goddess Aphrodite to disgrace and madness, Willy Loman, the salesman of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, is King Oedipus with a simple case pursuing his own identity and responsibility—Was it my fault?—to his doom.

Here too are phonny pipe dreams, but Willy has a true vision of a better sort of life, a life where a man is not a piece of fruit to be nibbled and thrown away. In his wife's big speech, the ultimate value of the human personality is passionately if somewhat inelegantly affirmed:

I don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person.

When they bury Willy at the end, that vision of human meaningfulness survives.

Beyond a slut Phaedra and a slob Oedipus, the end of the line would seem to be Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, where the very bottom of the social order, two ragged and half-crazed bums, speak for us and affirm the ultimate misery of the human condition yet its deathless hope. Even Blanche DuBois tried to freshen up the Kowalskis' upholstery, and Willy Loman saw buyers long after they had stopped buying, but Beckett's characters do not act at all; they merely wait. What they wait for, Godot, may not exist, and it may not matter if he does or does not. Francis Feigussan in *The Idea of a Theater* has phrased the tragic rhythm of action as: From Purpose through Passion to Perception. Here is an authentic tragedy in which purpose, passion and perception all coalesce in one timeless static waiting. Vladimir, the more intellectual of the two bums, affirms their sad pride in waiting in words surprisingly reminiscent of Simonides' epitaph on the Spartan dead at Thermopylae:

We have kept our appointment and that's an end to that. We are not saints, but we have kept our appointment. How many people can boast as much?

For us, as for the Greeks, tragedy has escaped the confines of drama, and we find it everywhere in our literature. One theme of lyric poetry that seems authentically tragic—as it was for Phaedra—is overpowering physical passion, fleshly love as tragic fate. It develops in Provençal poetry and reaches its high point in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, when Francesca in Hell tells Dante, while Paolo, her lover, weeps of the moment when she and he sinned. Modern poetry has made us thoroughly familiar with this tragic and devastating passion. Sometimes it is all implied, as in the marvelous economy of William Butler Yeats' six-line poem, *A Deep Sworn Vow*:

*Others because you did not keep  
That deep-sworn vow have been friends  
of mine*

*Yet always when I look death in the  
face,  
When I clamber to the heights of sleep  
Or when I grow excited with wine  
Suddenly I meet your face*

At other times it is defined so physically that we are reminded of Dante, as in John Crowe Ransom's *The Equilibrists* from which I quote a stanza that may take us even further back, to the Reliving Dionysus

*Great lovers lie in Hell the stubborn ones  
Infatuate of the flesh upon the bones  
Stuprate they rend each other when  
they kiss,  
The pieces kiss again no end to this*

Some of the same tragic passion appears in Negro blues songs understated in the words but overwhelming in the music as when Jimmy Rushing accompanied by Sam Price at the piano, sings *How Long*

*If I could holler like a mountain jack  
Go up on the mountain and call my  
baby back  
Baby how long? Baby how long? Baby  
how long?*

In our fiction we have the old tragic pattern of pride and fall but with strange new varieties of prides and falls. Captain Ahab in Melville's *Moby Dick* is like the mad infatuate Shakespeare heroes Lear or the later Othello. He has a new sort of heroic antagonist however no longer a malignant villain but blind wild nature embodied in the great white whale. In Ahab's frenzied desire to strike through the mask<sup>1</sup> and get at the ultimate evil of the universe, he is carried down to death lashed to the great whale. Only a transformed Ishmael riding on a coffin survives to tell the tale. The bitter intellectual protagonists of Dostoevski all in their different fashions believe that they are above or beyond society like King Oedipus. Then like him they are smashed down below it with some possibility of beginning their 12 generation there.

In stories like Mann's *Death in Venice* and Kafka's *The Judgment* we get a kind of Freudian tragedy of repression. It is, however a species of tragedy that Euripides knew all about in *The Bacchae* where punitanic King Pentheus represses his sensual nature until the god Dionysus, disguised as a handsome stranger releases all that he has kept hidden and leads him to disgrace and death. Mann's Gustave Aschenbach similarly represses his sensual nature and presents an image of stiff rectitude to the world until the appearance of the beautiful Polish boy Tadzio similarly breaks down his defenses and destroys him. Kafka's Georg Bendemann despised his old father in his duty underwear, as Pentheus at first despised the

effeminate stranger. Suddenly the old father like Euripides stranger turns out to conceal a divine omnipotence he cries out I sentence you to death by drowning and Georg dashes out and hurls himself off a bridge.

In other modern fiction the only transgression is the aspiration of the poor to rise to a degree of freedom and happiness. Perhaps the most tragic moment in James Joyce's *Ulysses* is the scene where Stephen Dedalus sees his ragged younger sister Dilly at a bookstall buying a coverless French primer for a penny and realizes that she has the same aspirations he has but that he can only save himself by letting her sink.

She is drowning Agenbite Save her Agenbite All  
against us She will drown me with her eyes and hair  
Lank coils of seaweed hair around me my heart my  
soul Salt green death

We

Agenbite of inwit Inwit's agenbite  
Misery! Misery!

Suffering the agenbite of inwit—Joyce's Anglo-Saxon equivalent for remorse of conscience—in one tragic moment Stephen both accepts his common humanity and denies it out of desperate necessity.

Nor are the rich without their tragedies. In Shirlev Jackson's *The Sundial* a fantasy about the end of the world the matriarch Mrs. Halloian brings on her death by donning a golden crown precisely as King Agamemnon in the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus incurs the wrath of the gods and his own death by treading on the carpet of royal purple. In James Gould Cozzens' *By Love Possessed* the upright and wealthy lawyer Arthur Winner is brought through suffering to feel something of the love and charity of the poor and dispossessed a winner only of insight through humiliation.

The same tragic patterns confront us everywhere in our newspapers. We see the fated love of great princes in the British royal family—as though it existed to remind us of that lost Shakespearean world—first in the heartbreaking abdication broadcast of Edward VIII then in the silent smoldering tragedy of Princess Margaret. Our own tragic princes include the ruined financier the fallen theatrical star the washed out sports champion with which we began this inquiry. The tragic movement is as visible in life as in art since it comes into art from life. If Orson Welles' film *Citizen Kane* was tragic, so was the life of William Randolph Hearst that inspired it, if O'Neill's autobiographical plays and F. Scott Fitzgerald's autobiographical novels are tragic so visibly, were their lives. Below these famous figures there are the sordid tragedies and the nameless sufferers of the tabloids a daily creation of grimy Clytemnestras Orestes Electras and Phaedras.

When King Farouk of Egypt is driven from his throne we feel only the poetic justice that a wicked and dissolute wastrel has at last been humbled, a sense of relief and restoration of faith rather than any tragic exultation. But when Sherman Adams, a man like ourselves neither wholly good nor wholly bad, an image of rectitude concealing a tragic shortcoming is toppled from his high seat of power we have true Aristotelian tragedy, and can feel pity and a kind of terror. When the people of Athens got bored with hearing the statesman Aristides called the Just and sentenced him to banishment, it was not simply spite and envy of an upright man. It was the same tragic sense they had of Pentheus and Hippolytus and we of Adams that too great a display of perfection challenges the gods that pride goeth before a fall.

We return then finally to the mysterious satisfaction of tragedy the question Saint Augustine raised so many centuries ago. For Aristotle, as we have seen it lay in catharsis the arousing and purging of pity and terror. For Hegel it was a sheer intellectual pleasure in the unfolding of the dialectic. Some like Lucretius have argued cynically that it is no more than a kind of sadistic pleasure we take in the sufferings of others. Schopenhauer believed with ultimate pessimism that the hero of tragedy atones for the crime of existence itself. In Freud's view, the satisfaction of tragedy is that the lower impulses he calls Id find symbolic gratification in the hero's misdeeds while the higher part of the personality he calls Superego finds its symbolic gratification in seeing the hero punished—and through him the personality's own Id. Other psychological theory has talked similarly of our empathy or projection onto the protagonist's crime and punishment.

Kenneth Burke in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* has defined all art as the arousing and fulfilling of expectations. If we accept that basic conception of form tragedy must always have a kind of inevitability. The Elizabethans seem sometimes to have conceived of it as merely a story that ended in death. There is similarly a tendency in our own time to see it as merely a sad ending and perhaps to complain that there is so much misery in real life that art should be cheerful.

Not everything ending unhappily however is tragedy. It must satisfy the expectations it has aroused. An example of a work that sets out deliberately to violate these expectations is a remarkable French movie of a few years back called *Forbidden Games*. The audience is led to believe, by all sorts of suggestions, that the rustic Romeo and Juliet youths of two feuding families will marry, reconcile the families and bring happiness to a homeless child. The young people in fact do not marry the families

are not reconciled, and the child returns to misery. The audience is left at the end horribly wrenched and moved, but feeling only a terrible pathos, none of the inevitability, rightness and grandeur of tragedy.

The awful deaths of children in the news are pathetic in this fashion rather than tragic. The grisly kidnaping and murder of the Lindbergh baby bore no relationship to anything the poor infant had done nor was the horrible Chicago parochial school fire a moral judgment of any sort. These frightful accidents move us deeply even to tears, but they are essentially meaningless and ugly where tragic death is meaningful and even beautiful.

The best explanation I know of the nature of tragedy is Herbert Weisinger's *Tragedy and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall*, a book to which my own understanding of the subject is considerably indebted. Weisinger insists that the tragic protagonist must be made to achieve victory at the moment of his deepest despair. Tragedy, he reminds us, is man's most vehement protest against meaninglessness. It gives us the sense of assurance achieved through suffering, of rational order. It proclaims that man is free but he is free within the limits set for us by his condition as man.

It is in terms of some such affirmations as these I think that the tragic vision is ultimately so rewarding. If it teaches us human limitation it also teaches us human possibility. Hobbes reminds us that the life of man has been characteristically solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. Tragedy answers that it has frequently been all of that, but that it is never ludicrous or meaningless. How far this tragic vision of man is despite its recognition of all the outer degradation and the inner evil from views of man in some contemporary literature as *Angry* or *Beat*. Tragedy reaffirms a nobility and grandeur in the human condition, even Longinus' sublimity. If it is man's fate to go down inevitably into suffering and death some exultation nevertheless rises to the skies. Man may be crushed, but the human spirit is for ever indestructible.

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the elements of the method of criticism which Mr Hyman uses? How do these differ from the methods of other critics represented here as for example Mr Tate?
- 2 How persuasive is this method? Does it help your understanding of the tragedies in the text?
- 3 Do you think that Mr Hyman is trying to explain more than his method will permit?
- 4 What disagreements do you have with Mr Hyman's judgments and conclusions?
- 5 What is your opinion of the essay from the point of view of its technique of exposition?



## COMEDY

## She Stoops to Conquer

(OR THE MISTAKES OF A NIGHT)\*

*Oliver Goldsmith*

In the century from 1673 when Wycherley's *The Country Wife* first appeared to 1777 when Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* was put on English comedy reached perhaps its wittiest most polished and most urbane expression. Shakespeare and Shaw stand pretty much alone among their contemporaries as writers of comedy but during the Restoration and eighteenth century virtually a whole school of writers of comedy for the stage flourished of whom Wycherley Congreve Goldsmith and Sheridan were the best but their pre-eminence was not without rivals. Even in this short span however the style and attitude of comedy changed the frankness of Wycherley gives way to the finish of Congreve which in turn was superseded by the good nature of Goldsmith and the sentiment of Sheridan. Despite these differences Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy is very much of a piece—well constructed particularly actable and in style of writing sophisticated and smooth. The author of some of the most beloved pieces of English writing *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *The Deserted Village* Goldsmith lived in Grub Street working at distasteful hack jobs of writing for a living but despite Boswell's jibes at his stupidity he was able enough to enjoy the friendship and respect of Dr Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds. *She Stoops to Conquer* was first performed at Covent Garden in 1773 and was an instant success. No wonder for the play is filled with Goldsmith's good humor and tolerant love.

To SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

DEAR SIR

By inscribing this slight performance to you, I do not mean so much to compliment you as myself. It may do me some honor to inform the public that I have lived many years in intimacy with you. It may serve the interests of mankind also to inform them that the greatest wit may be found in a character without impairing the most unaffected piety.

I have, particularly reason to thank you for your partiality to this performance. The undertaking a comedy not merely sentimental, was very dangerous,

\* The text and style of the play are based on the early editions of this comedy.

and Mr Colman who saw this piece in its various stages always thought it so. However I ventured to trust it to the public and though it was necessarily delayed till late in the season I have every reason to be grateful.

I am Dear Sir  
Your most sincere friend,  
And admirer  
OLIVER GOLDSMITH

## PROLOGUE

By DAVID GARRICK ESQ

*Enter MR WOODWARD Dressed in black and holding a handkerchief to his eyes*

Excuse me sirs I pray—I can't yet speak—I'm crying now—and have been all the week!  
*'Tis not alone this mourning suit* good masters  
*I've that within*—for which there are no plasters!  
Pray would you know the reason why I'm crying?  
The Comic Muse long sick is now a dying!  
And if she goes my tears will never stop  
For as a player I can't squeeze out one drop  
I am undone that's all—shall lose my bread—  
I'd rather but that's nothing—lose my head  
When the sweet maid is laid upon the bier  
Shuter and I shall be chief mourners here  
To her a mawkish drab of spurious breed  
Who deals in sentimentals will succeed!  
Poor Ned and I are dead to all intents  
We can as soon speak Greek as sentiments!  
Both nervous grown to keep our spirits up  
We now and then take down a hearty cup  
What shall we do?—If comedy forsake us!  
They'll turn us out and no one else will take us  
But why can't I be moral?—Let me try—  
My heart thus pressing—fixed my face and eye—  
With a sententious look that nothing means  
(Faces are blocks in sentimental scenes)  
Thus I begin—*All is not gold that glitters*  
*Pleasure seems sweet but proves a glass of bitters*  
*When ignorance enters folly is at hand*  
*Learning is better far than house and land*  
*Let not your virtue trip, who trips may stumble*  
*And virtue is not virtue, if she tumble*

I give it up—morals won't do for me  
To make you laugh I must play tragedy  
One hope remains—hearing the maid was ill  
A doctor comes this night to show his skill  
To cheer her heart and give your muscles motion,  
He in *five draughts* prepared presents a potion  
A kind of magic charm—for be assured  
If you will *swallow* it, the maid is cured  
But desperate the doctor, and her case is,



If you reject the dose and make wry faces!  
 This truth he boasts will boast it while he lives  
 No *poisonous drugs* are mixed in what he gives  
 Should he succeed you'll give him his degree  
 If not within he will receive no fee!  
 The college *you*, must his pretensions back  
 Pronounce him *regular* or dub him *quack*

### DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

SIR CHARLES MARLOW  
 YOUNG MARLOW, his son  
 HARDCASTLE  
 HASTINGS  
 TONY LUMPKIN  
 DIGGORY

MRS HARDCASTLE  
 MISS HARDCASTLE  
 MISS NEVILLE  
 MAID  
 Landlaid Servants &c, &c

### ACT I

#### SCENE I *A Chamber in an old fashioned House*

*Enter* MRS HARDCASTLE and MR HARDCASTLE

MRS HARDCASTLE I vow Mr Hardcastle you're very particular. Is there a creature in the whole country but ourselves that does not take a trip to town now and then to rub off the rust a little? There's the two Miss Hoggs and our neighbour Mrs Grigsby go to take a month's polishing every winter

10 HARDCASTLE Ay and bring back vanity and affection to last them the whole year. I wonder why London cannot keep its own fools at home. In my time, the follies of the town crept slowly among us but now they travel faster than a stage coach. Its fopperies come down not only as inside passengers but in the very basket

MRS HARDCASTLE Ay *your* times were fine times indeed you have been telling us of *them* for many a long year. Here we live in an old rumbling mansion that looks for all the world like an inn, but that we never see company. Our best visitors are old Mrs Oddfish the curate's wife and little Cripplegate, the lame dancing-master. And all our entertainment your old stories of Prince Eugene and the Duke of Marlborough. I hate such old fashioned trumpery

20 HARDCASTLE And I love it. I love every thing that's old: old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine and, I believe, Dorothy, (*taking her hand*) you'll own I have been pretty fond of an old wife

MRS HARDCASTLE Lord Mr Hardcastle you're forever at your Dorothy's and your old wife's. You may be a Darby but I'll be no Joan. I promise you I'm not so old as you'd make me by more than one good year. Add twenty to twenty and make money of that

HARDCASTLE Let me see, twenty added to twenty makes just fifty and seven

MRS HARDCASTLE It's false Mr Hardcastle. I was but twenty when I was brought to bed of Tony that I had by Mr Lumpkin my first husband and he's not come to years of discretion yet

HARDCASTLE Nor ever will I do answer for him. Ay you have taught him finely!

MRS HARDCASTLE No matter. Tony Lumpkin has a good fortune. My son is not to live by his learning. I don't think a boy wants too much learning to spend fifteen hundred a year

HARDCASTLE Learning quotha! A mere composition of tricks and mischief

MRS HARDCASTLE Humor my dear nothing but humor. Come, Mr Hardcastle you must allow the boy a little humor

HARDCASTLE I'd sooner allow him an horse pond. If burning the footmen's shoes, frightening the maids and worrying the kittens, be humor he has it. It was but yesterday he fastened my wig to the back of my chair and when I went to make a bow I popped my bald head in Mrs Frizzle's face

MRS HARDCASTLE And am I to blame? The poor boy was always too sickly to do any good. A school would be his death. When he comes to be a little stronger, who knows what a year or two's Latin may do for him?

HARDCASTLE Latin for him! A cat and fiddle. No, no the ale house and the stable are the only schools he'll ever go to

MRS HARDCASTLE Well, we must not snub the poor boy now for I believe we shan't have him long among us. Anybody that looks in his face may see he's consumptive

HARDCASTLE Ay, if growing too fat be one of the symptoms

MRS HARDCASTLE He coughs sometimes

HARDCASTLE Yes, when his liquor goes the wrong way

MRS HARDCASTLE I'm actually afraid of his lungs

HARDCASTLE And truly so am I, for he sometimes whoops like a speaking trumpet—(*TONY hallooing behind the Scenes*)—Oh there he goes—A very consumptive figure, truly

*Enter* TONY *crossing the Stage*

MRS HARDCASTLE Tony where are you going my charmer? Won't you give papa and I a little of your company lovee?

TONY I'm in haste mother. I cannot stay

MRS. HARDCASTLE You shan't venture out this raw evening my dear You look most shockingly

TONY I can't stay I tell you The Three Pigeons expects me down every moment There's some fun going forward

HARDCASTLE Ay the ale-house, the old place I thought so

MRS. HARDCASTLE A low paltry set of fellows

TONY Not so low neither There's Dick Muggins the excise man, Jack Slang the horse doctor Little Aminadab that grinds the music box, and Tom Twist that spins the pewter platter

MRS. HARDCASTLE Pray my dear disappoint them to one night at least

TONY As for disappointing *them* I should not so much mind, but I can't abide to disappoint *myself*

MRS. HARDCASTLE (*Detaining him*) You shan't go

TONY I will I tell you

MRS. HARDCASTLE I say you shan't

TONY Well see which is strongest you or I

*Exit hauling her out*

HARDCASTLE *solus*

HARDCASTLE Ay there goes a pair that only spoil each other But is not the whole age in a combination to drive sense and discretion out of doors? There's my pretty darling Kate the fashions of the times have almost infected her too By living a year or two in town, she is as fond of gauze, and French foppery, as the best of them

*Enter Miss HARDCASTLE*

HARDCASTLE Blessings on my pretty innocence! Dressed out as usual my Kate Goodness! What a quantity of superfluous silk hast thou got about thee girl! I could never teach the fools of this age that the indigent world could be clothed out of the trimmings of the vain

MRS. HARDCASTLE You know our agreement sir You allow me the morning to receive and pay visits and to dress in my own manner and in the evening I put on my housewife's dress to please you

HARDCASTLE Well remember I insist on the terms of our agreement and by the bye I believe I shall have occasion to try your obedience this very evening

MRS. HARDCASTLE I protest sir I don't comprehend your meaning

HARDCASTLE Then to be plain with you Kate I expect the young gentleman I have chosen to be your husband from town this very day I have his father's letter in which he informs me his son is set out and that he intends to follow himself shortly after

MRS. HARDCASTLE Indeed! I wish I had known something of this before Bless me, how shall I be

have? It's a thousand to one I shan't like him Our meeting will be so formal and so like a thing of business that I shall find no room for friendship or esteem

HARDCASTLE Depend upon it child I'll never controul your choice but Mr. Marlow whom I have pitched upon is the son of my old friend Sir Charles Marlow of whom you have heard me talk so often The young gentleman has been bred a scholar and is designed for an employment in the service of his country I am told he's a man of excellent understanding

MISS HARDCASTLE Is he?

HARDCASTLE Very generous

MISS HARDCASTLE I believe I shall like him

HARDCASTLE Young and brave

MISS HARDCASTLE I'm sure I shall like him

HARDCASTLE And very handsome

MISS HARDCASTLE My dear papa say no more (*kissing his hand*) he's mine I'll have him

HARDCASTLE And to crown all Kate he's one of the most bashful and reserved young fellows in all the world

MISS HARDCASTLE Eh! you have frozen me to death again That word reserved has undone all the rest of his accomplishments A reserved lover it is said always makes a suspicious husband

HARDCASTLE On the contrary modesty seldom resides in a breast that is not enriched with nobler virtues It was the very feature in his character that first struck me

MISS HARDCASTLE He must have more striking features to catch me I promise you However if he be so young, so handsome and so everything, as you mention I believe he'll do still I think I'll have him

HARDCASTLE Ay, Kate but there is still an obstacle It's more than an even wager he may not have *you*

MISS HARDCASTLE My dear papa why will you mortify one so?—Well, if he refuses instead of breaking my heart at his indifference, I'll only break my glass for its flattery, set my cap to some newer fashion and look out for some less difficult admirer

HARDCASTLE Bravely resolved! In the meantime I'll go prepare the servants for his reception as we seldom see company they want as much training as a company of recruits, the first day's muster *Exit*

*Miss HARDCASTLE, sola*

MISS HARDCASTLE Lud, this news of papa's puts me all in a flutter Young handsome, these he put last but I put them foremost Sensible good natured I like all that But then reserved and sheepish that's much against him Yet can't he be cured of his timidity by being taught to be proud of his wife? Yes, and can't I—But I vow I'm disposing of the husband before I have secured the lover

*Enter MISS NEVILLE*

MISS HARDCASTLE I'm glad you're come Neville my dear Tell me Constance, how do I look this evening? Is there any thing whimsical about me? Is it one of my well looking days child? Am I in face today?

MISS NEVILLE Perfectly, my dear Yet now I look again—bless me!—sure no accident has happened among the canary birds or the gold fishes Has your brother or the cat been meddling? Or has the last novel been too moving?

MISS HARDCASTLE No, nothing of all this I have been threatened—I can scarce get it out—I have been threatened with a lover

MISS NEVILLE And his name—

MISS HARDCASTLE Is Marlow

MISS NEVILLE Indeed!

MISS HARDCASTLE The son of Sir Charles Marlow

MISS NEVILLE As I live the most intimate friend of Mr Hastings my admirer They are never asunder I believe you must have seen him when we lived in town

MISS HARDCASTLE Never

MISS NEVILLE He's a very singular character I assure you Among women of reputation and virtue he is the modestest man alive but his acquaintance give him a very different character among creatures of another stamp you understand me

MISS HARDCASTLE An odd character indeed I shall never be able to manage him What shall I do? Pshaw think no more of him but trust to occurrences for success But how goes on your own affair my dear? has my mother been courting you for my brother Tony as usual?

MISS NEVILLE I have just come from one of our agreeable *tete a tetes* She has been saying a hundred tender things and setting off her pretty monster as the very pink of perfection

MISS HARDCASTLE And her partiality is such that she actually thinks him so A fortune like yours is no small temptation Besides, as she has the sole management of it I'm not surprised to see her unwilling to let it go out of the family

MISS NEVILLE A fortune like mine which chiefly consists in jewels is no such mighty temptation But at any rate if my dear Hastings be but constant I make no doubt to be too hard for her at last However I let her suppose that I am in love with her son and she never once dreams that my affections are fixed upon another

MISS HARDCASTLE My good brother holds out stoutly I could almost love him for hating you so

MISS NEVILLE It is a good natured creature at bottom and I'm sure would wish to see me married to anybody but himself But my aunt's bell rings for our

afternoon's walk round the improvements *Allons* Courage is necessary as our affairs are critical

MISS HARDCASTLE Would it were bed time and all were well *Exeunt*

SCENE II *An Ale house Room Several shabby fellows with Punch and Tobacco TONY at the head of the Table a little higher than the rest A mallet in his hand* 60

OMNES Huius hurrea hurrea bravo!

FIRST FELLOW Now, gentlemen silence for a song The squire is going to knock himself down for a song

OMNES Ay a song, a song

TONY Then I'll sing you gentlemen a song I made upon this ale house, The Three Pigeons

# SONG

70

Let school masters puzzle their brain  
With grammar and nonsense and learning  
Good liquor, I stoutly maintain  
Gives genius a better discerning  
Let them brag of their Heathenish Gods  
Then Lethes then Styxes and Stygians  
Then Quis and then Quoes and their Quods,  
They're all but a parcel of Pigeons  
Toroddle toroddle toroll!

When Methodist preachers come down 80  
A preaching that drinking is sinful  
I'll wager the rascals a clown  
They always preach best with a skinful  
But when you come down with your pence  
For a slice of their scurvy religion  
I'll leave it to all men of sense,  
But you my good friend are the pigeon  
Toroddle, toroddle toroll!

Then come put the jorum about 90  
And let us be merry and clever  
Our hearts and our liquors are stout,  
Here's the Three Jolly Pigeons for ever  
Let some cry up woodcock or hare,  
You bustards your ducks and your widgeons  
But of all the birds in the air  
Here's a health to the Three Jolly Pigeons  
Toroddle toroddle, toroll!

OMNES Bravo biavo

FIRST FELLOW The squire has got spunk in him

SECOND FELLOW I loves to hear him sing bekeays 100  
he never gives us nothing that's low

THIRD FELLOW O damn anything that's low, I cannot bear it

FOURTH FELLOW The genteel thing is the genteel

thing at any time If so be that a gentleman bees in a concatenation accordingly

THIRD FELLOW I like the maxum of it Master Muggins What though I am obligated to dance a beai a man may be a gentleman for all that May this be my poison if my bear ever dances but to the very genteelst of tunes *Water Parted*, or the minuet in *Aradne*

10 SECOND FELLOW What a pity it is the squire is not come to his own It would be well for all the publicans within ten miles round of him

TONY Ecod and so it would, Master Slang I'd then show what it was to keep choice of company

SECOND FELLOW Oh he takes after his own father for that To be sure old squire Lumpkin was the finest gentleman I ever set my eyes on For winding the straight horn or beating a thicket for a hare or a wench he never had his fellow It was a saying in the place, that he kept the best horses, dogs and 20 girls in the whole county

TONY Ecod and when I'm of age I'll be no bastard, I promise you I have been thinking of Bet Bouncer and the milled grey mare to begin with But come my boys drink about and be merry, for you pay no reckoning Well, Stingo what's the matter?

*Enter LANDLORD*

30 LANDLORD There be two gentlemen in a post chaise at the door They have lost their way upo the forest and they are talking something about Mr Hardcastle

TONY As sure as can be one of them must be the gentleman that's coming down to court my sister Do they seem to be Londoners?

LANDLORD I believe they may They look woundily like Frenchmen

40 TONY Then desue them to step this way and I'll set them right in a twinkling (*Exit LANDLORD*) Gentlemen as they mayn't be good enough company for you step down for a moment and I'll be with you in the squeezing of a lemon *Exeunt MOB*

TONY *solus*

TONY Father-in-law has been calling me whelp and hound this half year Now if I pleased, I could be so revenged upon the old grumbletonian But then I'm afraid—afraid of what? I shall soon be worth fifteen hundred a year and let him frighten me out of that if he can

50 *Enter LANDLORD conducting MARLOW and HASTINGS*

MARLOW What a tedious, uncomfortable day have we had of it! We were told it was but forty miles across the country and we have come above three score

HASTINGS And all Marlow, from that unaccount

able reserve of yours that would not let us enquire more frequently on the way

MARLOW I own Hastings, I am unwilling to lay myself under an obligation to every one I meet and often stand the chance of an unmannerly answer 60

HASTINGS At present however we are not likely to receive any answer

TONY No offence gentlemen But I'm told you have been enquiring for one Mr Hardcastle in these parts Do you know what part of the country you are in?

HASTINGS Not in the least sir, but should thank you for information

TONY Nor the way you came?

HASTINGS No, sir but if you can inform us— 70

TONY Why, gentlemen if you know neither the road you are going nor where you are nor the road you came, the first thing I have to inform you is, that —You have lost your way

MARLOW We wanted no ghost to tell us that

TONY Pray gentlemen may I be so bold as to ask the place from whence you came?

MARLOW That's not necessary towards directing us where we are to go

TONY No offence but question for question is all fair you know Pray gentlemen is not this the same Hardcastle a cross grained, old-fashioned whimsical fellow with an ugly face a daughter, and a pretty son? 80

HASTINGS We have not seen the gentleman, but he has the family you mention

TONY The daughter a tall trapesing, trolloping, talkative maypole—The son a pretty well-bred agreeable youth that everybody is fond of

MARLOW Our information differs in this The daughter is said to be well bred and beautiful the son, an awkward booby reared up and spoiled at his mother's apron-string 90

TONY He-he-hem—Then gentlemen, all I have to tell you is that you won't reach Mr Hardcastle's house this night, I believe

HASTINGS Unfortunate!

TONY It's a damnd long dark, boggy dirty, dangerous way Stingo tell the gentlemen the way to Mr Hardcastle's (*Winking upon the LANDLORD*) Mr Hardcastle's of Quagmire Marsh you understand me 100

LANDLORD Master Hardcastle's! Lack-a-daisy, my masters you're come a deadly deal wrong! When you came to the bottom of the hill you should have crossed down Squash lane

MARLOW Cross down Squash-lane!

LANDLORD Then you were to keep straight forward till you came to four roads

MARLOW Come to where four roads meet! 110

TONY Ay, but you must be sure take only one of them

MARLOW O sh you're facetious

TONY Then keeping to the right, you are to go side ways till you come upon Crackskull common. There you must look sharp for the track of the wheel and go forward till you come to farmer Murrain's barn. Coming to the farmer's barn you are to turn to the right, and then to the left and then to the right about again till you find out the old mill—

MARLOW Zounds man! we could as soon find out the longitude!

HASTINGS What's to be done Marlow?

MARLOW This house promises but a poor reception though perhaps the Landlord can accommodate us

LANDLORD Alack master, we have but one spare bed in the whole house

TONY And to my knowledge that's taken up by three lodgers already (*After a pause in which the rest seem disconcerted*) I have hit it. Don't you think Stingo, our landlady could accommodate the gentlemen by the fire side with—three chairs and a bolster?

HASTINGS I hate sleeping by the fire-side

MARLOW And I detest your three chairs and a bolster

TONY You do do you?—then let me see—what—if you go on a mile further to the Bucks Head the old Bucks Head on the hill one of the best inns in the whole county?

HASTINGS O ho! so we have escaped an adventure for this night however

LANDLORD (*Apart to TONY*) Sure you bent send ing them to your father's as an inn, be you?

TONY Mum you fool you. Let *them* find that out (*To them*) You have only to keep on straight for w'd till you come to a large old house by the road side. You'll see a pair of large horns over the door. That's the sign. Drive up the yard and call stoutly about you

HASTINGS Sir, we are obliged to you. The servants can't miss the way?

TONY No, no. But I tell you though the landlord is rich and going to leave off business, so he wants to be thought a gentleman saving your presence he! he! He'll be for giving you his company and, ecod if you mind him, he'll persuade you that his mother was an alderman and his aunt a justice of peace

LANDLORD A troublesome old blade, to be sure but a keeps as good wines and beds as any in the whole country

MARLOW Well, if he supplies us with these we shall want no further connection. We are to turn to the right, did you say?

TONY No no, straight forward. I'll just step myself and show you a piece of the way (*To the LANDLORD*) Mum

LANDLORD Ah bless your heart for a sweet pleasant—damned mischievous son of a whore *Exeunt*

## ACT II

60

### SCENE I *An old fashioned house*

*Enter HARDCASTLE followed by three or four awkward SERVANTS*

HARDCASTLE Well I hope you're perfect in the table exercise I have been teaching you these three days. You all know your posts and your places and can show that you have been used to good company without ever stirring from home

OMNES Ay, ay

HARDCASTLE When company comes you are not to pop out and stare and then run in again like frightened rabbits in a warden

OMNES No no

HARDCASTLE You Diggory whom I have taken from the barn are to make a show at the side table and you Roger whom I have advanced from the plough are to place yourself behind *my* chair. But you're not to stand so with your hands in your pockets. Take your hands from your pockets. Roger and from your head you blockhead you. See how Diggory carries his hands. They're a little too stiff indeed but that's no great matter

DIGGORY Ay mind how I hold them. I learned to hold my hands this way when I was upon drill for the militia. And so being upon drill—

HARDCASTLE You must not be so talkative. Diggory You must be all attention to the guests. You must hear us talk and not think of talking, you must see us drink and not think of drinking. You must see us eat and not think of eating

DIGGORY By the laws your worship that's perfectly impossible. Whenever Diggory sees yeating going forward, ecod, he's always wishing for a mouthful himself

HARDCASTLE Blockhead! Is not a belly full in the kitchen as good as a belly-full in the parlour? Stay your stomach with that reflection

DIGGORY Ecod I thank your worship. I'll make a shift to stay my stomach with a slice of cold beef in the panty

HARDCASTLE Diggory you are too talkative. Then if I happen to say a good thing or tell a good story at table, you must not all burst out a laughing as if you made part of the company

DIGGORY Then ecod your worship must not tell the story of Ould Grouse in the gun-room. I can't help laughing at that—he! he! he!—for the soul of me. We have laughed at that these twenty years—ha! ha! ha!

101

HARDCASTLE Ha! ha! ha! The story is a good one Well honest Diggory you may laugh at that—but still remember to be attentive Suppose one of the company should call for a glass of wine how will you behave? A glass of wine su if you please (To DIGGORY)—Eh why don't you move?

DIGGORY Ecod your woishup I never have cour age till I see the eatables and drinkables brought upo the table and then I'm as bauld as a lion

10 HARDCASTLE What will nobody move?

FIRST SERVANT I'm not to leave this pleace

SECOND SERVANT I'm sure it's no pleace of mine

THIRD SERVANT Nor mine for sartain

DIGGORY Wauns and I'm sure it canna be mine

20 HARDCASTLE You numbskulls! and so while like your betters you are quarrelling for places the guests must be starved O you dunces! I find I must begin all over again —But don't I hear a coach drive into the yard? To your posts you blockheads I'll go in the mean time and give my old friends son a hearty reception at the gate

*Exit*

DIGGORY By the elevens my pleace is gone quite out of my head

ROGER I know that my pleace is to be everywhere

FIRST SERVANT Where the devil is mine?

SECOND SERVANT My pleace is to be nowhere at all and so I ze go about my business

*Exeunt SERVANTS running about as if frightened different ways*

30 *Enter SERVANT with candles showing in*

MARLOW and HASTINGS

SERVANT Welcome, gentlemen, vey welcome This way

HASTINGS After the disappointments of the day, welcome once more Charles to the comforts of a clean room and a good fire Upon my word a very well looking house antique but creditable

40 MARLOW The usual fate of a large mansion Having first ruined the master by good housekeeping it at last comes to levy contributions as an inn

HASTINGS As you say we passengers are to be taxed to pay all these fineries I have often seen a good sideboard or a marble chimney piece, though not actually put in the bill enframe a reckoning con foundedly

MARLOW Travellers George, must pay in all places The only difference is that in good inns you pay dearly for luxuries, in bad inns you are fleeced and starved

50 HASTINGS You have lived pretty much among them In truth I have been often surprised that you who have seen so much of the world with your nat ural good sense and your many opportunities could never yet acquire a requisite share of assurance

MARLOW The Englishman's melody But tell me George, where could I have learned that assurance

you talk of? My life has been chiefly spent in a col lege or an inn in seclusion from that lovely part of the creation that chiefly teach men confidence I don't know that I was ever familiarly acquainted with a single modest woman—except my mother— But among females of another class you know—

HASTINGS Ay among them you are impudent enough of all conscience

MARLOW They are of *us* you know

HASTINGS But in the company of women of reputa tion I never saw such an idiot such a trembler you look for all the world as if you wanted an opportu nity of stealing out of the room

70 MARLOW Why man that's because I *do* want to steal out of the room Faith, I have often formed a resolution to break the ice and rattle away at any rate But I don't know how a single glance from a pair of fine eyes has totally overset my resolution An impudent fellow may counterfeit modesty but I'll be hanged if a modest man can ever counterfeit impudence

HASTINGS If you could but say half the fine things to them that I have heard you lavish upon the brumaid of an inn or even a college bed maker—

MARLOW Why George I can't say fine things to them They freeze they petrify me They may talk of a comet or a burning mountain or some such bagatelle But to me a modest woman dressed out in all her finery is the most tremendous object of the whole creation

HASTINGS Ha! ha! ha! At this rate man how can you ever expect to marry!

90 MARLOW Never unless as among kings and princes, my bride were to be courted by proxy If indeed, like an Eastern bridegroom one were to be introduced to a wife he never saw before it might be endured But to go through all the terrors of a formal courtship together with the episode of aunts grandmothers and cousins and at last to blurt out the broad staring question of, *Madam will you marry me?* No, no that's a strain much above me, I assure you

100 HASTINGS I pity you But how do you intend be having to the lady you are come down to visit at the request of your father?

MARLOW As I behave to all other ladies Bow very low Answer yes or no to all her demands—But for the rest I don't think I shall venture to look in her face till I see my father's again

HASTINGS I'm surprised that one who is so warm a friend can be so cool a lover

110 MARLOW To be explicit my dear Hastings my chief inducement down was to be instrumental in forwarding your happiness not my own Miss Neville loves you the family don't know you, as my friend you are sure of a reception and let honor do the rest

HASTINGS My dear Marlow! But I'll suppress the

emotion Were I a wretch, meanly seeking to carry off a fortune you should be the last man in the world I would apply to for assistance But Miss Neville's person is all I ask and that is mine both from her deceased father's consent and her own inclination

MARLOW Happy man! You have talents and art to captivate any woman I'm doomed to adore the sex, and yet to converse with the only part of it I despise This stammer in my address and this awkward pre-  
 10 possessing visage of mine can never permit me to soar above the reach of a milliner's apprentice or one of the duchesses of Drury Lane Pshaw! this fellow here to interrupt us

Enter HARDCASTLE

HARDCASTLE Gentlemen once more you are heartily welcome Which is Mr Marlow? Sir you're heartily welcome It's not my way, you see to receive my friends with my back to the fire I like to give them a hearty reception in the old style at my gate  
 20 I like to see their horses and trunks taken care of

MARLOW (*Aside*) He has got our names from the servants already (*To him*) We approve your caution and hospitality sir (*To HASTINGS*) I have been thinking George of changing our travelling dresses in the morning I am grown confoundedly ashamed of mine

HARDCASTLE I beg Mr Marlow, you'll use no ceremony in this house

HASTINGS I fancy Charles you're right the first  
 30 blow is half the battle I intend opening the campaign with the white and gold

MR HARDCASTLE Mr Marlow—Mr Hastings—gentlemen—pray be under no constraint in this house This is Liberty Hall gentlemen You may do just as you please here

MARLOW Yet George if we open the campaign too fiercely at first we may want ammunition before it is over I think to reserve the embroidery to secure a retreat

HARDCASTLE Your talking of a retreat Mr Marlow puts me in mind of the Duke of Marlborough, when we went to besiege Denain He first summoned the garrison—

MARLOW Don't you think the *ventre dor* waistcoat will do with the plain brown?

HARDCASTLE He first summoned the garrison which might consist of about five thousand men—

HASTINGS I think not brown and yellow mix but very poorly

HARDCASTLE I say, gentlemen as I was telling you he summoned the garrison, which might consist of about five thousand men—

MARLOW The girls like finery

HARDCASTLE Which might consist of about five thousand men, well appointed with stores, ammuni-

tion, and other implements of war Now says the Duke of Marlborough to George Brooks that stood next to him—You must have heard of George Brooks—I'll pawn my Dukedom says he but I take that garrison without spilling a drop of blood  
 60 So—

MARLOW What my good friend if you gave us a glass of punch in the meantime it would help us to carry on the siege with vigor

HARDCASTLE Punch sir! (*Aside*) This is the most unaccountable kind of modesty I ever met with

MARLOW Yes sir punch A glass of wum punch after our journey, will be comfortable This is Liberty Hall you know

HARDCASTLE Here's cup sir

MARLOW (*Aside*) So this fellow, in his Liberty Hall will only let us have just what he pleases

HARDCASTLE (*Taking the Cup*) I hope you'll find it to your mind I have prepared it with my own hands, and I believe you'll own the ingredients are tolerable Will you be so good as to pledge me sir? Here Mr Marlow here is to our better acquaintance

(*Drinks*)

MARLOW (*Aside*) A very impudent fellow this! but he's a character and I'll humor him a little Sir my service to you

(*Drinks*)

HASTINGS (*Aside*) I see this fellow wants to give us his company and forgets that he's an innkeeper before he has learned to be a gentleman

MARLOW From the excellence of your cup my old friend I suppose you have a good deal of business in this part of the country Warm work now and then at elections I suppose?

HARDCASTLE No sir, I have long given that work over Since our betters have hit upon the expedient of electing each other, there's no business for us that  
 90 sell ale

HASTINGS So then you have no turn for politics I find

HARDCASTLE Not in the least There was a time indeed I fretted myself about the mistakes of government like other people but finding myself every day grow more angry and the government growing no better I left it to mend itself Since that I no more trouble my head about Heyder Ally, or Ally Cawn than about Ally Croaker Sir my service to you

HASTINGS So that with eating above stairs and drinking below with receiving your friends within and amusing them without you lead a good pleasant bustling life of it

HARDCASTLE I do stir about a great deal that's certain Half the differences of the parish are adjusted in this very parlor

MARLOW (*After drinking*) And you have an argument in your cup, old gentleman better than any in Westminster Hall  
 110



HARDCASTLE Ay, young gentleman, that and a little philosophy

MARLOW (*Aside*) Well this is the first time I ever heard of an innkeeper's philosophy

HASTINGS So then like an experienced general you attack them on every quarter If you find their reason manageable you attack it with your philosophy if you find they have no reason you attack them with this Here's your health my philosopher  
(*Drinks*)

HARDCASTLE Good very good, thank you ha! ha! Your generalship puts me in mind of Prince Eugene when he fought the Turks at the battle of Belgrade You shall hear—

MARLOW Instead of the battle of Belgrade, I believe it's almost time to talk about supper What has your philosophy got in the house for supper?

HARDCASTLE For supper sir! (*Aside*) Was ever such a request to a man in his own house!

MARLOW Yes sir supper sir I begin to feel an appetite I shall make devilish work tonight in the larder I promise you

HARDCASTLE (*Aside*) Such a brazen dog sure never my eyes beheld (*To him*) Why really sir as for supper I can't well tell My Dorothy and the cook maid settle these things between them I leave these kind of things entirely to them

MARLOW You do do you?

HARDCASTLE Entirely By-the bye I believe they are in actual consultation upon what's for supper this moment in the kitchen

MARLOW Then I beg they'll admit me as one of their privy council It's a way I have got When I travel I always choose to regulate my own supper Let the cook be called No offence I hope sir

HARDCASTLE O no, sir none in the least yet I don't know how our Bridget the cook maid is not very communicative upon these occasions Should we send for her she might scold us all out of the house

HASTINGS Let's see your list of the larder then I ask it as a favor I always match my appetite to my bill of fare

MARLOW (*To HARDCASTLE who looks at them with surprise*) Sir, he's very right, and it's my way too

HARDCASTLE Sir you have a right to command here Here Roger bring us the bill of fare for to night's supper I believe it's drawn out Your manner Mr Hastings puts me in mind of my uncle Colonel Wallop It was a saying of his that no man was sure of his supper till he had eaten it

HASTINGS (*Aside*) All upon the high ropes! His uncle a Colonel! We shall soon hear of his mother being a justice of peace But let's hear the bill of fare

MARLOW (*Perusing*) What's here? For the first course for the second course for the dessert The

devil, sir, do you think we have brought down the whole Joiners Company or the Corporation of Bedford to eat up such a supper? Two or three little things, clean and comfortable will do

HASTINGS But let's hear it

MARLOW (*Reading*) For the first course, at the top, a pig and prune sauce

HASTINGS Damn your pig I say

MARLOW And damn your prune sauce say I

HARDCASTLE And yet gentlemen, to men that are hungry pig with prune sauce is very good eating

MARLOW At the bottom a calves tongue and brains

HASTINGS Let your brains be knocked out my good sir I don't like them

MARLOW Or you may chop them on a plate by themselves I do

HARDCASTLE (*Aside*) Their impudence confounds me (*To them*) Gentlemen you are my guests make what alterations you please Is there any thing else you wish to retrench or alter gentlemen?

MARLOW Item A pork pie a boiled rabbit and sausages a florentine a shaking pudding and a dish of tiff—taff—taffety cream!

HASTINGS Confound your made dishes I shall be as much at a loss in this house as at a green and yellow dinner at the French ambassador's table I'm for plain eating

HARDCASTLE I'm sorry gentlemen that I have nothing you like but if there be any thing you have a particular fancy to—

MARLOW Why, really sir your bill of fare is so exquisite that any one part of it is full as good as another Send us what you please So much for supper And now to see that our beds are aired and properly taken care of

HARDCASTLE I entreat you'll leave all that to me You shall not stir a step

MARLOW Leave that to you! I protest sir you must excuse me I always look to these things myself

HARDCASTLE I must insist sir you'll make yourself easy on that head

MARLOW You see I'm resolved on it (*Aside*) A very troublesome fellow this, as ever I met with

HARDCASTLE Well, sir I'm resolved at least to attend you (*Aside*) This may be modern modesty but I never saw anything look so like old fashioned impudence

*Exeunt* MARLOW and HARDCASTLE

HASTINGS *solus*

HASTINGS So I find this fellow's civilities begin to grow troublesome But who can be angry at those assiduities which are meant to please him? Ha! what do I see? Miss Neville by all that's happy!

*Enter* MISS NEVILLE

MISS NEVILLE My dear Hastings! To what unex-

pected good fortune to what accident am I to ascribe this happy meeting?

HASTINGS Rather let me ask the same question as I could never have hoped to meet my dearest Constance in an inn

MISS NEVILLE An inn! sure you mistake! my aunt my guardian lives here What could induce you to think this house an inn?

HASTINGS My friend Mr Marlow with whom I came down and I have been sent here as to an inn I assure you A young fellow whom we accidentally met at a house had by directed us hither

MISS NEVILLE Certainly it must be one of my hopeful cousins tricks of whom you have heard me talk so often ha! ha! ha!

HASTINGS He whom your aunt intends for you? He of whom I have such just apprehensions?

MISS NEVILLE You have nothing to fear from him, I assure you You do adore him if you knew how heartily he despises me My aunt knows it too and has undertaken to court me for him and actually begins to think she has made a conquest

HASTINGS Thou dear dissembler! You must know, my Constance, I have just seized this happy opportunity of my friend's visit here to get admittance into the family The horses that carried us down are now fatigued with their journey but they'll soon be refreshed and then if my dearest girl will trust in her faithful Hastings we shall soon be landed in France where even among slaves the laws of marriage are respected

MISS NEVILLE I have often told you that though ready to obey you I yet should leave my little fortune behind with reluctance The greatest part of it was left me by my uncle the India Director and chiefly consists in jewels I have been for some time persuading my aunt to let me wear them I fancy I'm very near succeeding The instant they are put into my possession you shall find me ready to make them and myself yours

HASTINGS Perish the baubles! Your person is all I desire In the meantime my friend Marlow must not be let into his mistake I know the strange reserve of his temper is such that if abruptly informed of it he would instantly quit the house before our plan was ripe for execution

MISS NEVILLE But how shall we keep him in the deception? Miss Hardcastle is just returned from walking what if we still continue to deceive him?— This this way— (They confer)

*Enter MARLOW*

MARLOW The assiduities of these good people tease me beyond bearing My host seems to think it ill manners to leave me alone and so he claps not only himself but his old fashioned wife on my back They talk of coming to sup with us too, and then I

suppose we are to run the gauntlet through all the rest of the family—What have we got here!—

HASTINGS My dear Charles! Let me congratulate you!—The most fortunate accident!—Who do you think is just alighted?

MARLOW Cannot guess

HASTINGS Our mistresses boy Miss Hardcastle and Miss Neville Give me leave to introduce Miss Constance Neville to your acquaintance Happening to dine in the neighborhood they called on their return to take fresh horses here Miss Hardcastle has just stepped into the next room and will be back in an instant Wasn't it lucky? eh!

MARLOW (Aside) I have just been mortified enough of all conscience and here comes something to complete my embarrassment

HASTINGS Well! but wasn't it the most fortunate thing in the world?

MARLOW Oh! yes Very fortunate—a most joyful encounter—But our dresses George you know are in disorder—What if we should postpone the happiness till tomorrow?—tomorrow at her own house—It will be every bit as convenient—And rather more respectful—Tomorrow let it be

(Offering to go)

MISS NEVILLE By no means so Your ceremony will displease her The disorder of your dress will show the ardor of your impatience Besides, she knows you are in the house and will permit you to see her

MARLOW Oh! the devil! how shall I support it? Hem! hem! Hastings you must not go You are to assist me you know I shall be confoundingly ridiculous Yet hang it! I'll take courage Hem!

HASTINGS Pshaw man! it's but the first plunge and all's over She's but a woman you know

MARLOW And of all women she that I dread most to encounter!

*Enter MISS HARDCASTLE as returned from walking a Bonnet &c*

HASTINGS (Introducing them) Miss Hardcastle Mr Marlow I'm proud of bringing two persons of such merit together that only want to know to esteem each other

MISS HARDCASTLE (Aside) Now for meeting my modest gentleman with a demure face and quite in his own manner (After a pause in which he appears very uneasy and disconcerted) I'm glad of your safe arrival sir—I'm told you had some accidents by the way

MARLOW Only a few madam Yes we had some Yes madam a good many accidents, but should be sorry—madam—or rather glad of any accidents—that are so agreeably concluded Hem!

HASTINGS (To him) You never spoke better in

your whole life Keep it up and I'll insure you the victory

MISS HARDCASTLE I'm afraid you flatter *su* You think have seen so much of the finest company can find little entertainment in an obscure corner of the country

MARLOW (*Gathering courage*) I have lived indeed in the world madam but I have kept very little company I have been but an observer upon life madam while others were enjoying it

MISS NEVILLE But that I am told is the way to enjoy it at last

HASTINGS (*To him*) Cicero never spoke better Once more, and you are confirmed in assurance for ever

MARLOW (*To him*) Hem! Stand by me then and when I'm down throw in a word or two to set me up again

MISS HARDCASTLE An observer like you, upon life were I fear disagreeably employed since you must have had much more to censure than to approve

MARLOW Pardon me madam I was always willing to be amused The folly of most people is rather an object of mirth than uneasiness

HASTINGS (*To him*) Bravo bravo! Never spoke so well in your whole life Well! Miss Hardcastle I see that you and Mr Marlow are going to be very good company I believe our being here will but embarrass the interview

MARLOW Not in the least Mr Hastings We like your company of all things (*To him*) Zounds! George sure you won't go? How can you leave us?

HASTINGS Our presence will but spoil conversation so well retire to the next room (*To him*) You don't consider man that we are to manage a little *tete a tete* of our own

MISS HARDCASTLE (*After a pause*) But you have not been wholly an observer I presume *su* The ladies I should hope have employed some part of your addresses

MARLOW (*Relapsing into timidity*) Pardon me, madam, I—I—I—as yet have studied—only—to—deserve them

MISS HARDCASTLE And that, some say is the very wisest way to obtain them

MARLOW Perhaps so, madam But I love to converse only with the more grave and sensible part of the sex —But I'm afraid I grow tiresome

MISS HARDCASTLE Not at all *su* there is nothing I like so much as grave conversation myself I could hear it for ever Indeed I have often been surprised how a man of *sentiment* could ever admire those light, airy pleasures where nothing reaches the heart

MARLOW It's—a disease—of the mind madam In the variety of tastes there must be some who wanting a relish—for—um—*u*—um

MISS HARDCASTLE I understand you *sir* There must be some who wanting a relish for refined pleasures pretend to despise what they are incapable of tasting

MARLOW My meaning madam but infinitely better expressed And I can't help observing—*u*—

MISS HARDCASTLE (*Aside*) Who could ever suppose this fellow impudent upon some occasions (*To him*) You were going to observe *su*—

MARLOW I was observing madam—I protest madam I forget what I was going to observe

MISS HARDCASTLE (*Aside*) I vow and so do I (*To him*) You were observing *su* that in this age of hypocrisy—something about hypocrisy *sir*

MARLOW Yes madam In this age of hypocrisy there are few who upon strict enquiry do not—a—a—

MISS HARDCASTLE I understand you perfectly *su*

MARLOW (*Aside*) Egad! and that's more than I do myself

MISS HARDCASTLE You mean that in this hypocritical age there are few that do not condemn in public what they practise in private and think they pay every debt to virtue when they praise it

MARLOW True madam those who have most virtue in their mouths have least of it in their bosoms But I'm sure I tire you madam

MISS HARDCASTLE Not in the least *sir* there's something so agreeable and spirited in your manner such life and force—pray *su* go on

MARLOW Yes madam I was saying—that there are some occasions—when a total want of courage madam, destroys all the—and puts us—upon a—a—*u*—

MISS HARDCASTLE I agree with you entirely a want of courage upon some occasions assumes the appearance of ignorance and betrays us when we most want to excel I beg you'll proceed

MARLOW Yes madam Morally speaking madam —But I see Miss Neville expecting us in the next room I would not intrude for the world

MISS HARDCASTLE I protest *sir* I never was more agreeably entertained in all my life Pray go on

MARLOW Yes madam I was—But she beckons us to join her Madam, shall I do myself the honour to attend you?

MISS HARDCASTLE Well then I'll follow

MARLOW (*Aside*) This pretty smooth dialogue has done for me

*Exit*

MISS HARDCASTLE *sola*

MISS HARDCASTLE Ha! ha! ha! Was there ever such a sober sentimental interview? I'm certain he scarce looked in my face the whole time Yet the fellow, but for his unaccountable bashfulness is pretty well too He has good sense but then so buried in his fears that it fatigues one more than ignorance If I

could teach him a little confidence, it would be doing somebody that I know of a piece of service But who is that somebody?—that faith is a question I can scarce answer *Exit*

*Enter TONY and MISS NEVILLE followed by MRS HARDCASTLE and HASTINGS*

TONY What do you follow me for cousin Con? I wonder you're not ashamed to be so very engaging

MISS NEVILLE I hope cousin one may speak to one's own relations and not be to blame

TONY Ay but I know what sort of a relation you want to make me though but it won't do I tell you, cousin Con it won't do so I beg you'll keep your distance I want no nearer relationship

*(She follows coquetting him to the back scene)*

MRS HARDCASTLE Well! I vow Mr Hastings, you are very entertaining There's nothing in the world I love to talk of so much as London and the fashions, though I was never there myself

HASTINGS Never there! You amaze me! From your air and manner I concluded you had been bred all your life either at Ranelagh St James's or Tower Wharf

MRS HARDCASTLE O! Sir you're only pleased to say so We country persons can have no manner at all I'm in love with the town and that serves to raise me above some of our neighbouring rustics but who can have a manner that has never seen the Pantheon, the Grotto Gardens, the Borough, and such places where the Nobility chiefly resort? All I can do is to enjoy London at second-hand I take care to know every *tête à tête* from the *Scandalous Magazine* and have all the fashions as they come out in a letter from the two Miss Rickets of Crooked Lane Pray how do you like this head Mr Hastings?

HASTINGS Extremely elegant and *degagée*, upon my word madam Your *friseur* is a Frenchman I suppose?

MRS HARDCASTLE I protest I dressed it myself from a print in the *Ladies Memorandum Book* for the last year

HASTINGS Indeed Such a head in a side box at the Playhouse would draw as many gazers as my Lady Myress at a City Ball

MRS HARDCASTLE I vow since inoculation began, there is no such thing to be seen as a plain woman so one must dress a little particular or one may escape in the crowd

HASTINGS But that can never be your case madam in any dress *(Bowing)*

MRS HARDCASTLE Yet, what signifies my dressing when I have such a piece of antiquity by my side as Mr Hardcastle All I can say will never argue down a single button from his cloths I have often wanted him to throw off his great flaxen wig and

where he was bald, to plaster it over like my Lord Pately with powder

HASTINGS You are right, madam for as among the ladies there are none ugly, so among the men there are none old

MRS HARDCASTLE But what do you think his answer was? Why with his usual Gothic vivacity he said I only wanted him to throw off his wig to convert it into a *tête* for my own wearing

HASTINGS Intolerable! At your age you may wear what you please and it must become you

MRS HARDCASTLE Pray Mr Hastings what do you take to be the most fashionable age about town?

HASTINGS Some time ago forty was all the mode, but I'm told the ladies intend to bring up fifty for the ensuing winter

MRS HARDCASTLE Seriously? Then I shall be too young for the fashion

HASTINGS No lady begins now to put on jewels till she's past forty For instance Miss there in a polite circle would be considered as a child as a mere maker of samplers

MRS HARDCASTLE And yet Miss Niece thinks herself as much a woman and is as fond of jewels as the oldest of us all

HASTINGS Your niece is she? And that young gentleman—a brother of yours, I should presume?

MRS HARDCASTLE My son Sir They are contracted to each other Observe their little sports They fall in and out ten times a day as if they were man and wife already *(To them)* Well Tony child what soft things are you saying to your cousin Constance this evening?

TONY I have been saying no soft things but that it's very hard to be followed about so Ecod! I've not a place in the house now that's left to myself but the stable

MRS HARDCASTLE Never mind him Con my dear He's in another story behind your back

MISS NEVILLE There's something generous in my cousin's manner He falls out before faces to be for given in private

TONY That's a damned confounded—crack

MRS HARDCASTLE Ah! he's a sly one Don't you think they're like each other about the mouth Mr Hastings? The Blenkinsop mouth to a T They're of a size too Back to back my pretties that Mr Hastings may see you Come Tony

TONY You had as good not make me I tell you

*(Measuring)*

MISS NEVILLE O lud! he has almost cracked my head

MRS HARDCASTLE O the monster! For shame Tony You a man and behave so!

TONY If I'm a man let me have my fortune Ecod! I'll not be made a fool of no longer

MRS HARDCASTLE Is this ungrateful boy all that

I'm to get for the pains I have taken in your education? I that have rocked you in your cradle and fed that pretty mouth with a spoon! Did not I work that waistcoat to make you genteel? Did not I prescribe for you every day and weep while the receipt was operating?

10 TONY Ecod! you had reason to weep, for you have been dosing me ever since I was born. I have gone through every receipt in the complete huswife ten times over and you have thoughts of coursing me through *Quincy* next spring. But ecod! I tell you, I'll not be made a fool of no longer.

MRS. HARDCASTLE Wasn't it all for your good viper? Wasn't it all for your good?

TONY I wish you'd let me and my good alone then. Snubbing this way when I'm in spirits. If I'm to have any good, let it come of itself, not to keep dinging it dinging it into one so.

20 MRS. HARDCASTLE That's false. I never see you when you're in spirits. No, Tony, you then go to the ale house or kennel. I'm never to be delighted with your agreeable, wild notes, unfeeling monster!

TONY Ecod! Mamma, your own notes are the wildest of the two.

MRS. HARDCASTLE Was ever the like? But I see he wants to break my heart. I see he does.

HASTINGS Dear madam, permit me to lecture the young gentleman a little. I'm certain I can persuade him to his duty.

30 MRS. HARDCASTLE Well! I must retire. Come, Constance, my love. You see, Mr. Hastings, the wretchedness of my situation. Was ever poor woman so plagued with a dear, sweet, pretty provoking un dutiful boy.

*Exeunt* MRS. HARDCASTLE and MISS NEVILLE

HASTINGS TONY

TONY (*Singing*) *There was a young man riding by and fain would have his will Rang do didlo dee*  
40 Don't mind her. Let her cry. It's the comfort of her heart. I have seen her and sister cry over a book for an hour together and they said, they liked the book the better the more it made them cry.

HASTINGS Then you're no friend to the ladies. I find my pretty young gentleman?

TONY That's as I find 'um.

HASTINGS Not to her of your mother's choosing, I dare answer? And yet she appears to me a pretty, well-tempered girl.

50 TONY That's because you don't know her as well as I. Ecod! I know every inch about her and there's not a more bitter, cantankerous toad in all Christendom.

HASTINGS (*Aside*) Pretty encouragement this for a lover!

TONY I have seen her since the height of that

She has as many tricks as a hare in a thicket or a colt the first day's breaking.

HASTINGS To me she appears sensible and silent!

TONY Ay, before company. But when she's with her playmates, she's as loud as a hog in a gate. 60

HASTINGS But there is a meek modesty about her that charms me.

TONY Yes, but curb her never so little, she kicks up and you're flung in a ditch.

HASTINGS Well, but you must allow her a little beauty—Yes, you must allow her some beauty.

TONY Bandbox! She's all a made-up thing, mum. Ah! could you but see Bet Bouncer of these parts you might then talk of beauty. Ecod, she has two eyes as black as sloes and cheeks as broad and red as a pulpit cushion. She'd make two of her. 70

HASTINGS Well, what say you to a friend that would take this bitter bargain off your hands?

TONY Anon.

HASTINGS Would you thank him that would take Miss Neville and leave you to happiness and your dear Betsy?

TONY Ay, but where is there such a friend for who would take her?

HASTINGS I am he. If you but assist me, I'll engage to whip her off to France and you shall never hear more of her. 80

TONY Assist you! Ecod, I will to the last drop of my blood. I'll clap a pair of horses to your chaise that shall tundle you off in a twinkling and maybe get you a part of her fortune beside, in jewels that you little dream of.

HASTINGS My dear squue, this looks like a lad of spirit.

TONY Come along then, and you shall see more of my spirit before you have done with me (*Singing*). 90

*We are the boys*

*That fears no noise*

*Where the thundering cannons roar* *Exeunt*

### ACT III

#### SCENE I *The house*

*Enter* HARDCASTLE *solus*

HARDCASTLE What could my old friend Sir Charles mean by recommending his son as the modestest young man in town? To me he appears the most impudent piece of brass that ever spoke with a tongue. He has taken possession of the easy chair by the fire side already. He took off his boots in the parlor, and desired me to see them taken care of. I'm desirous to know how his impudence affects my daughter—She will certainly be shocked at it. 100

*Enter MISS HARDCASTLE, plainly dressed*

HARDCASTLE Well my Kate I see you have changed your dress as I bid you and yet I believe there was no great occasion

MISS HARDCASTLE I find such a pleasure sin in obeying your commands that I take care to observe them without ever debating their propriety

HARDCASTLE And yet, Kate I sometimes give you some cause particularly when I recommended my modest gentleman to you as a lover today

MISS HARDCASTLE You taught me to expect something extraordinary and I find the original exceeds the description

HARDCASTLE I was never so surprised in my life! He has quite confounded all my faculties!

MISS HARDCASTLE I never saw any thing like it And a man of the world too!

HARDCASTLE Ay, he learned it all abroad—what a fool was I to think a young man could learn modesty by travelling He might as soon learn wit at a masquerade

MISS HARDCASTLE It seems all natural to him

HARDCASTLE A good deal assisted by bad company and a French dancing master

MISS HARDCASTLE Sure you mistake papal a French dancing master could never have taught him that timid look—that awkward address,—that bashful manner—

HARDCASTLE Whose look? whose manner? child!

MISS HARDCASTLE Mr Marlow's his *mauvaise honte* his timidity struck me at the first sight

HARDCASTLE Then your first sight deceived you for I think him one of the most brazen first sights that ever astonished my senses

MISS HARDCASTLE Sure, sir, you rally! I never saw any one so modest

HARDCASTLE And can you be serious! I never saw such a bouncing swaggering puppy since I was born Bully Dawson was but a fool to him

MISS HARDCASTLE Surprising! He met me with a respectful bow a stammering voice, and a look fixed on the ground

HARDCASTLE He met me with a loud voice a lordly air and a familiarity that made my blood freeze again

MISS HARDCASTLE He treated me with diffidence and respect censured the manners of the age admired the prudence of gulls that never laughed tired me with apologies for being tiresome then left the room with a bow and, madam I would not for the world detain you

HARDCASTLE He spoke to me as if he knew me all his life before Asked twenty questions, and never waited for an answer Interrupted my best remarks with some silly pun and when I was in my best story of the Duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene he

asked if I had not a good hand at making punch Yes Kate he asked your father if he was a maker of punch!

MISS HARDCASTLE One of us must certainly be mistaken

HARDCASTLE If he be what he has shown himself I'm determined he shall never have my consent

MISS HARDCASTLE And if he be the sullen thing I take him he shall never have mine

HARDCASTLE In one thing then we are agreed—to reject him

MISS HARDCASTLE Yes But upon conditions For if you should find him less impudent and I more presuming if you find him more respectful and I more importunate—I don't know—the fellow is well enough for a man—Certainly we don't meet many such at a horse race in the country

HARDCASTLE If we should find him so—But that's impossible The first appearance has done my business I'm seldom deceived in that

MISS HARDCASTLE And yet there may be many good qualities under that first appearance

HARDCASTLE Ay when a girl finds a fellow's outside to her taste she then sets about guessing the rest of his furniture With her a smooth face stands for good sense and a genteel figure for every virtue

MISS HARDCASTLE I hope, sir a conversation begun with a compliment to my good sense won't end with a sneer at my understanding?

HARDCASTLE Pardon me Kate But if young Mr Biazon can find the art of reconciling contradictions he may please us both perhaps

MISS HARDCASTLE And as one of us must be mistaken what if we go to make further discoveries?

HARDCASTLE Agreed But depend on't I'm in the right

MISS HARDCASTLE And depend on't I'm not much in the wrong

*Exeunt*

*Enter TONY, running in with a casket*

TONY Ecod! I have got them Here they are My cousin Cons necklaces, bobs and all My mother shan't cheat the poor souls out of their fortune neither O! my genius is that you?

*Enter HASTINGS*

HASTINGS My dear friend how have you managed with your mother? I hope you have amused her with pretending love for your cousin and that you are willing to be reconciled at last? Our horses will be refreshed in a short time and we shall soon be ready to set off

TONY And here's something to bear your charges by the way (*Giving the casket*) Your sweetheart's jewels Keep them and hang those, I say, that would rob you of one of them

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HASTINGS But how have you procured them from your mother?

TONY Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no fibs. I procured them by the rule of thumb. If I had not a key to every drawer in mother's bureau, how could I go to the ale house so often as I do? An honest man may rob himself of his own at any time.

HASTINGS Thousands do it every day. But to be plain with you, Miss Neville is endeavoring to procure them from her aunt this very instant. If she succeeds, it will be the most delicate way at least of obtaining them.

TONY Well, keep them till you know how it will be. But I know how it will be well enough: she'd as soon part with the only sound tooth in her head.

HASTINGS But I dread the effects of her resentment when she finds she has lost them.

TONY Never you mind her resentment; leave me to manage that. I don't value her resentment; the bounce of a cracker. Zounds! here they are. Morrice Pounce.

*Exit* HASTINGS

TONY MRS. HARDCASTLE MISS NEVILLE

MRS. HARDCASTLE Indeed, Constance, you amaze me. Such a girl as you want jewels? It will be time enough for jewels, my dear, twenty years hence when your beauty begins to want repairs.

MISS NEVILLE But what will repair beauty at forty, will certainly improve it at twenty, madam.

MRS. HARDCASTLE Yours, my dear, can admit of none. That natural blush is beyond a thousand ornaments. Besides, child, jewels are quite out at present. Don't you see half the ladies of our acquaintance, my Lady Killdaylight and Mrs. Clump and the rest of them, carry their jewels to town and bring nothing but Paste and Marcasites back?

MISS NEVILLE But who knows, madam, but some body that shall be nameless would like me best with all my little finery about me?

MRS. HARDCASTLE Consult your glass, my dear, and then see if with such a pair of eyes you want any better sparklers. What do you think, Tony, my dear, does your cousin Con want any jewels in your eyes to set off her beauty?

TONY That's as thereafter may be.

MISS NEVILLE My dear aunt, if you knew how it would oblige me.

MRS. HARDCASTLE A parcel of old-fashioned rose and table-cut things. They would make you look like the court of King Solomon at a puppet show. Besides, I believe I can't readily come at them. They may be missing for aught I know to the contrary.

TONY (*Apart to* MRS. HARDCASTLE) Then why don't you tell her so at once, as she's so longing for them. Tell her they're lost. It's the only way to quiet her. Say they're lost and call me to bear witness.

MRS. HARDCASTLE (*Apart to* TONY) You know,

my dear, I'm only keeping them for you. So if I say they're gone, you'll bear me witness, will you? He! he! he!

TONY Never fear me. Ecod! I'll say I saw them taken out with my own eyes.

MISS NEVILLE I desire them but for a day, madam. Just to be permitted to show them as relics, and then they may be locked up again.

MRS. HARDCASTLE To be plain with you, my dear Constance, if I could find them, you should have them. They're missing. I assure you. Lost for aught I know, but we must have patience wherever they are.

MISS NEVILLE I'll not believe it. This is but a shallow pretence to deny me. I know they're too valuable to be so slightly kept, and as you are to answer for the loss.

MRS. HARDCASTLE Don't be alarmed, Constance. If they be lost, I must restore an equivalent. But my son knows they are missing and not to be found.

TONY That I can bear witness to. They are missing and not to be found, I'll take my oath on't.

MRS. HARDCASTLE You must learn resignation, my dear, for though we lose our fortune, yet we should not lose our patience. See me how calm I am.

MISS NEVILLE Ay, people are generally calm at the misfortunes of others.

MRS. HARDCASTLE Now, I wonder a girl of your good sense should waste a thought upon such trumpery. We shall soon find them, and in the meantime you shall make use of my garnets till your jewels be found.

MISS NEVILLE I detest garnets.

MRS. HARDCASTLE The most becoming things in the world to set off a clear complexion. You have often seen how well they look upon me. You *shall* have them.

*Exit*

MISS NEVILLE I dislike them of all things. You shan't stir—Was ever any thing so provoking—to mislay my own jewels and force me to wear her trumpery.

TONY Don't be a fool. If she gives you the garnets, take what you can get. The jewels are your own already. I have stolen them out of her bureau and she does not know it. Fly to your spark, he'll tell you more of the matter. Leave me to manage her.

MISS NEVILLE My dear cousin!

TONY Vanish! She's here and has missed them already. (*Exit* MISS NEVILLE) Zounds! how she fidgets and spits about like a Catharine wheel.

*Enter* MRS. HARDCASTLE

MRS. HARDCASTLE Confusion! thieves! robbers! We are cheated, plundered, broke, open, undone.

TONY What's the matter? What's the matter, mamma? I hope nothing has happened to any of the good family!



MRS HARDCASTLE We are robbed My bureau has been broke open the jewels taken out and I'm undone

TONY Oh is that all? Ha! ha! ha! By the laws I never saw it better acted in my life Ecod I thought you was ruined in earnest ha ha ha!

MRS HARDCASTLE Why boy I *am* ruined in earnest My bureau has been broken open and all taken away

10 TONY Stick to that ha, ha ha! stick to that I'll bear witness you know call me to bear witness

MRS HARDCASTLE I tell you, Tony by all that's precious, the jewels are gone and I shall be ruined for ever

TONY Sure I know they're gone, and I am to say so

MRS HARDCASTLE My dearest Tony, but hear me They're gone I say

20 TONY By the laws mamma, you make me for to laugh ha! ha! I know who took them well enough ha! ha! ha!

MRS HARDCASTLE Was there ever such a block-head that can't tell the difference between jest and earnest I tell you I'm not in jest booby

TONY That's right that's right You must be in a bitter passion and then nobody will suspect either of us I'll bear witness that they are gone

30 MRS HARDCASTLE Was there ever such a cross-gained brute, that won't hear me! Can you bear witness that you're no better than a fool? Was ever poor woman so beset with fools on one hand, and thieves on the other?

TONY I can bear witness to that

MRS HARDCASTLE Bear witness again, you block-head you and I'll turn you out of the room directly My poor niece what will become of *her*! Do you laugh you unfeeling brute as if you enjoyed my distress?

TONY I can bear witness to that

40 MRS HARDCASTLE Do you insult me monster? I'll teach you to vex your mother, I will

TONY I can bear witness to that

*He runs off, she follows him*

MISS HARDCASTLE What an unaccountable creature is that brother of mine to send them to the house as an inn ha! ha! I don't wonder at his impudence

50 MAID But what is more madam the young gentleman as you passed by in your present dress asked me if you were the barmaid? He mistook you for the barmaid madam

MISS HARDCASTLE Did he? Then as I live, I'm resolved to keep up the delusion Tell me, Pimple how do you like my present dress? Don't you think I look something like Cherry in the *Beaux Strata-gem*?

MAID It's the dress madam, that every lady wears

in the country, but when she visits or receives company

MISS HARDCASTLE And are you sure he does not remember my face or person?

MAID Certain of it

MISS HARDCASTLE I vow I thought so for though we spoke for some time together yet his fears were such that he never once looked up during the interview Indeed if he had, my bonnet would have kept him from seeing me

MAID But what do you hope from keeping him in his mistake?

MISS HARDCASTLE In the first place I shall be *seen* and that is no small advantage to a girl who brings her face to market Then I shall perhaps make an acquaintance and that's no small victory gained over one who never addresses any but the wildest of her sex But my chief aim is to take my gentleman off his guard, and, like an invisible champion of romance examine the giant's force before I offer to combat

MAID But are you sure you can act your part and disguise your voice so that he may mistake that as he has already mistaken your person?

MISS HARDCASTLE Never fear me I think I have got the true bar-cant—Did your honor call?—Attend the Lion there—Pipes and tobacco for the Angel—The Lamb has been outrageous this half hour

MAID It will do madam But he's here *Exit*

*Enter MARLOW*

MARLOW What a bawling in every part of the house I have scarce a moment's repose If I go to the best room there I find my host and his story If I fly to the gallery there we have my hostess with her curtsy down to the ground I have at last got a moment to myself, and now for recollection

*(Walks and muses)*

MISS HARDCASTLE Did you call, sir? Did your honor call?

MARLOW *(Musing)* As for Miss Hardcastle, she's too grave and sentimental for me

MISS HARDCASTLE Did your honor call?

*(She still places herself before him he turning away)*

MARLOW No child *(Musing)* Besides from the glimpse I had of her I think she squints

MISS HARDCASTLE I'm sure sir, I heard the bell ring

MARLOW No, no *(Musing)* I have pleased my father however, by coming down and I'll tomorrow please myself by returning

*(Taking out his tablets and perusing)*

MISS HARDCASTLE Perhaps the other gentleman called, sir?

MARLOW I tell you, no

MISS HARDCASTLE I should be glad to know sir  
We have such a parcel of servants

MARLOW No no I tell you (*Looks full in her face*) Yes, child I think I did call I wanted—I wanted—I vow child you are vastly handsome

MISS HARDCASTLE O la sir you'll make one ashamed

MARLOW Never saw a more spitefully malicious eye Yes yes my dear I did call Have you got any  
10 of you—a—what d'ye call it in the house?

MISS HARDCASTLE No sir we have been out of that these ten days

MARLOW One may call in this house I find to very little purpose Suppose I should call for a taste just by way of trial of the nectar of your lips perhaps I might be disappointed in that too

MISS HARDCASTLE Nectar! nectar! That's a liquor there's no call for in these parts French I suppose We keep no French wines here sir

MARLOW Of true English growth I assure you

MISS HARDCASTLE Then it's odd I should not know it We brew all sorts of wines in this house, and I have lived here these eighteen years

MARLOW Eighteen years! Why one would think child, you kept the bar before you were born How old are you?

MISS HARDCASTLE O! Sir I must not tell my age They say women and music should never be dated

MARLOW To guess at this distance you can't be much above forty (*Approaching*) Yet nearer, I don't think so much (*Approaching*) By coming close to some women, they look younger still but when we come very close indeed—

(*Attempting to kiss her*)

MISS HARDCASTLE Pray sir keep your distance One would think you wanted to know one's age as they do horses by mark of mouth

MARLOW I protest child you use me extremely ill If you keep me at this distance how is it possible  
40 you and I can ever be acquainted?

MISS HARDCASTLE And who wants to be acquainted with you? I want no such acquaintance not I I'm sure you did not treat Miss Hardcastle that was here awhile ago in this obstinacious manner I'll warrant me before her you looked dashed and kept bowing to the ground and talked for all the world as if you was before a justice of peace

MARLOW (*Aside*) Egad! she has hit it sure enough (*To her*) In awe of her child? Ha! ha! ha! A mere, awkward, squinting thing? no no! I find you don't know me I laughed and rallied her a little but I was unwilling to be too severe No, I could not be too severe, curse me!

MISS HARDCASTLE Oh! then sir you're a favorite I find, among the ladies?

MARLOW Yes my dear a great favorite And yet, hang me I don't see what they find in me to follow

At the Ladies Club in town I'm called their agreeable Rattle Rattle child, is not my real name, but one I'm known by My name is Solomons Mr Solo  
60 mons my dear at your service

(*Offering to salute her*)

MISS HARDCASTLE Hold sir you are introducing me to your club, not to yourself And you're so great a favorite there you say?

MARLOW Yes my dear There's Mrs Mantrap, Lady Betty Blackleg the Countess of Sligo, Mrs Langhorns old Miss Biddy Buckskin, and your humble servant keep up the spirit of the place

MISS HARDCASTLE Then it's a very merry place, I suppose?

MARLOW Yes, as merry as cards suppers, wine, and old women can make us

MISS HARDCASTLE And their agreeable Rattle ha! ha! ha!

MARLOW (*Aside*) Egad! I don't quite like this chit She looks knowing methinks You laugh child!

MISS HARDCASTLE I can't but laugh to think what time they all have for minding their work or their family

MARLOW (*Aside*) All's well she don't laugh at me (*To her*) Do you ever work child?

MISS HARDCASTLE Ay sure There's not a screen or a quilt in the whole house but what can bear witness to that

MARLOW Odso! Then you must show me your embroidery I embroider and draw patterns myself a little If you want a judge of your work you must apply to me

(*Seizing her hand*)

MISS HARDCASTLE Ay, but the colors don't look well by candlelight You shall see all in the morning

(*Struggling*)

MARLOW And why not now my angel? Such beauty fires beyond the power of resistance —Pshaw! the father here! My old luck I never nicked seven that I did not throw ames ace three times following  
Exit

Enter HARDCASTLE, who stands in surprise

HARDCASTLE So madam So I find *this* is your modest lover This is your humble admirer that kept  
100 his eyes fixed on the ground and only adored at humble distance Kate Kate art thou not ashamed to deceive your father so?

MISS HARDCASTLE Never trust me, dear papa but he's still the modest man I first took him for you'll be convinced of it as well as I

HARDCASTLE By the hand of my body, I believe his impudence is infectious! Didn't I see him seize your hand? Didn't I see him haul you about like a milkmaid? and now you talk of his respect and his modesty forsooth!

MISS HARDCASTLE But if I shortly convince you of his modesty, that he has only the faults that will

pass off with time and the virtues that will improve with age I hope you'll forgive him

HARDCASTLE The girl would actually make one run mad! I tell you I'll not be convinced I am convinced He has scarcely been three hours in the house, and he has already encroached on all my prerogatives You may like his impudence, and call it modesty But my son in law, madam must have very different qualifications

10 MISS HARDCASTLE Sir I ask but this night to convince you

HARDCASTLE You shall not have half the time for I have thoughts of turning him out this very hour

MISS HARDCASTLE Give me that hour then and I hope to satisfy you

HARDCASTLE Well an hour let it be then But I'll have no trifling with your father All fair and open, do you mind me?

20 MISS HARDCASTLE I hope, sir you have ever found that I considered your commands as my pride for your kindness is such that my duty as yet has been inclination *Exeunt*

## ACT IV

### SCENE I *The house*

*Enter HASTINGS and MISS NEVILLE*

HASTINGS You surprise me! Sir Charles Marlow expected here this night? Where have you had your information?

30 MISS NEVILLE You may depend upon it I just saw his letter to Mr Hardcastle, in which he tells him he intends setting out a few hours after his son

HASTINGS Then, my Constance, all must be completed before he arrives He knows me, and should he find me here, would discover my name and perhaps my designs to the rest of the family

MISS NEVILLE The jewels, I hope, are safe

40 HASTINGS Yes, yes I have sent them to Marlow who keeps the keys of our baggage In the meantime I'll go to prepare matters for our elopement I have had the squire's promise of a fresh pair of horses, and, if I should not see him again will write him further directions *Exit*

MISS NEVILLE Well! success attend you In the meantime, I'll go amuse my aunt with the old pretence of a violent passion for my cousin *Exit*

*Enter MARLOW followed by a SERVANT*

50 MARLOW I wonder what Hastings could mean by sending me so valuable a thing as a casket to keep for him when he knows the only place I have is the seat of a post coach at an inn door Have you deposited the casket with the landlady as I ordered you? Have you put it into her own hands?

SERVANT Yes, your honor

MARLOW She said she'd keep it safe, did she?

SERVANT Yes she said she'd keep it safe enough she asked me how I came by it? and she said she had a great mind to make me give an account of myself *Exit*

MARLOW Ha! ha! ha! They're safe, however What an unaccountable set of beings have we got amongst! 60 This little barmaid though runs in my head most strangely and drives out the absurdities of all the rest of the family She's mine she must be mine, or I'm greatly mistaken

*Enter HASTINGS*

HASTINGS Bless me! I quite forgot to tell her that I intended to prepare at the bottom of the garden Marlow here and in spirits too!

MARLOW Give me joy, George! Crown me shadow me with laurels! Well, George, after all we modest 70 fellows don't want for success among the women

HASTINGS Some women, you mean But what success has your honor's modesty been crowned with now, that it grows so insolent upon us?

MARLOW Didn't you see the tempting, brisk lovely little thing that runs about the house with a bunch of keys to its girdle?

HASTINGS Well! and what then?

MARLOW She's mine you rogue you Such fine such motion such eyes such lips—but egad! she 80 would not let me kiss them though

HASTINGS But are you so sure so very sure of her?

MARLOW Why man, she talked of showing me her work above stairs and I am to improve the pattern HASTINGS But how can you Charles go about to rob a woman of her honor?

MARLOW Pshaw! pshaw! we all know the honor of the barmaid of an inn I don't intend to rob her take my word for it, there's nothing in this house I shan't honestly pay for 90

HASTINGS I believe the girl has virtue

MARLOW And if she has I should be the last man in the world that would attempt to corrupt it

HASTINGS You have taken care, I hope of the casket I sent you to lock up? It's in safety?

MARLOW Yes yes It's safe enough I have taken care of it But how could you think the seat of a post coach at an inn door a place of safety? Ah! numbskull! I have taken better precautions for you than you did for yourself—I have— 100

HASTINGS What!

MARLOW I have sent it to the landlady to keep for you

HASTINGS To the landlady!

MARLOW The landlady

HASTINGS You did!

MARLOW I did She's to be answerable for its forthcoming, you know

HASTINGS Yes, she'll bring it forth with a witness  
MARLOW Wasn't I right? I believe you'll allow  
that I acted prudently upon this occasion?

HASTINGS (*Aside*) He must not see my uneasiness

MARLOW You seem a little disconcerted though,  
methinks. Sure nothing has happened?

HASTINGS No nothing. Never was in better spirits  
in all my life. And so you left it with the landlady  
who no doubt, very readily undertook the charge?

10 MARLOW Rather too readily. For she not only  
kept the casket but through her great precaution,  
was going to keep the messenger too. Ha! ha! ha!

HASTINGS He! he! he! They're safe however

MARLOW As a guinea in a miser's purse

HASTINGS (*Aside*) So now all hopes of fortune  
are at an end and we must set off without it (*To*  
*him*) Well, Charles, I'll leave you to your medita-  
tions on the pretty barmaid and he! he! he! may  
you be as successful for yourself as you have been

20 for me. *Exit*  
MARLOW Thank ye, George! I ask no more! Ha!  
ha! ha!

*Enter* HARDCASTLE

HARDCASTLE I no longer know my own house.  
It's turned all topsy-turvey. His servants have got  
drunk already. I'll bear it no longer and yet, from  
my respect for his father, I'll be calm (*To him*)  
Mr Marlow, your servant. I'm your very humble  
servant. (*Bowing low*)

30 MARLOW Sir, your humble servant (*Aside*)  
What's to be the wonder now?

HARDCASTLE I believe, sir, you must be sensible  
still that no man alive ought to be more welcome  
than your father's son, sir. I hope you think so?

MARLOW I do from my soul, sir. I don't want  
much intreaty. I generally make my father's son  
welcome wherever he goes.

HARDCASTLE I believe you do from my soul, sir.  
But though I say nothing to your own conduct, that  
40 of your servants is insufferable. Their manner of  
drinking is setting a very bad example in this house,  
I assure you.

MARLOW I protest, my very good sir, that's no  
fault of mine. If they don't drink as they ought, *they*  
are to blame. I ordered them not to spare the cellar.  
I did. I assure you (*To the side scene*) Here let  
one of my servants come up (*To him*) My positive  
directions were that as I did not drink myself, they  
should make up for my deficiencies below.

50 HARDCASTLE Then they had your orders for what  
they do! I'm satisfied!

MARLOW They had, I assure you. You shall hear  
from one of themselves.

*Enter* SERVANT *drunk*

MARLOW You, Jeremy! Come forward, sirrah!  
What were my orders? Were you not told to drink

freely, and call for what you thought fit, for the  
good of the house?

HARDCASTLE (*Aside*) I begin to lose my patience.

JEREMY Please your honor, liberty and Fleet  
Street for ever! Though I'm but a servant, I'm as  
good as another man. I'll drink for no man before  
supper, sir, dammy! Good liquor will sit upon a  
good supper, but a good supper will not sit upon  
—*hiccup*—upon my conscience, sir. *Exit*

MARLOW You see, my old friend, the fellow is  
as drunk as he can possibly be. I don't know what  
you'd have more, unless you'd have the poor devil  
soused in a beer-barrel.

HARDCASTLE Zounds! He'll drive me distracted if  
I contain myself any longer—Mr Marlow, sir, I  
have submitted to your insolence for more than  
four hours and I see no likelihood of its coming  
to an end. I'm now resolved to be master here, sir,  
and I desire that you and your drunken pack may  
leave my house directly.

MARLOW Leave your house!—Sure you jest, my  
good friend! What when I'm doing what I can to  
please you!

HARDCASTLE I tell you, sir, you don't please me  
so I desire you'll leave my house.

MARLOW Sure you cannot be serious? At this time  
o'night and such a night? You only mean to banter  
me?

HARDCASTLE I tell you, sir, I'm serious and now  
that my passions are roused, I say this house is  
mine, sir, this house is mine, and I command you  
to leave it directly.

MARLOW Ha! ha! ha! A puddle in a storm. I  
shan't stir a step, I assure you (*In a serious tone*)  
This, your house, fellow! It's my house. This is my  
house. Mine while I choose to stay. What right have  
you to bid me leave this house, sir? I never met  
with such impudence, curse me, never in my whole  
life before.

HARDCASTLE Nor I, confound me if ever I did  
To come to my house, to call for what he likes to  
turn me out of my own chair to insult the family,  
to order his servants to get drunk and then to tell  
me *This house is mine* sir. By all that's impudent,  
it makes me laugh. Ha! ha! ha! Pray, sir, (*bantering*)  
as you take the house, what think you of taking the  
rest of the furniture? There's a pair of silver candle  
sticks, and there's a fire screen, and here's a pair of  
brazen nosed bellows perhaps you may take a fancy  
to them?

MARLOW Bring me your bill, sir, bring me your  
bill, and let's make no more words about it.

HARDCASTLE There are a set of prints too. What  
think you of *The Rake's Progress* for your own apart-  
ment?

MARLOW Bring me your bill, I say, and I'll leave  
you and your infernal house directly.

HARDCASTLE Then there's a mahogany table, that you may see your own face in

MARLOW My bill, I say

HARDCASTLE I had forgot the great chair for your own particular slumbers after a hearty meal

MARLOW Zounds! bring me my bill I say, and let's hear no more on't

10 HARDCASTLE Young man young man from your father's letter to me I was taught to expect a well-bred modest man as a visitor here but now I find him no better than a coxcomb and a bully but he will be down here presently, and shall hear more of it *Exit*

MARLOW How's this! Sure I have not mistaken the house? Everything looks like an inn The servants cry *Coming* The attendance is awkward the barmaid too to attend us But she's here and will further inform me Whither so fast, child? A word with you

20 *Enter MISS HARDCASTLE*

MISS HARDCASTLE Let it be short then I'm in a hurry (*Aside*) I believe he begins to find out his mistake but it's too soon quite to undeceive him

MARLOW Pray child, answer me one question What are you, and what may your business in this house be?

MISS HARDCASTLE A relation of the family, sir

MARLOW What! A poor relation?

30 MISS HARDCASTLE Yes sir A poor relation appointed to keep the keys and to see that the guests want nothing in my power to give them

MARLOW That is, you act as the barmaid of this inn

MISS HARDCASTLE Inn! O law—what brought that in your head? One of the best families in the county keep an inn! Ha ha ha old Mr Hardcastle's house in inn?

MARLOW Mr Hardcastle's house? Is this house Mr Hardcastle's house child?

40 MISS HARDCASTLE Ay, sure Whose else should it be?

MARLOW So then all's out and I have been damnably imposed on Oh confound my stupid head I shall be laughed at over the whole town I shall be stuck up in *caricatura* in all the printshops The Dullissimo Maccaroni To mistake this house of all others for an inn and my father's old friend for an innkeeper What a swaggering puppy must he take me for What a silly puppy do I find myself There again may I be hanged, my dear, but I mistook you for the barmaid

MISS HARDCASTLE Dear me! dear me! I'm sure there's nothing in my *behavior* to put me upon a level with one of that stamp

MARLOW Nothing my dear nothing But I was in for a list of blunders, and could not help making you a subscriber My stupidity saw everything the

wrong way I mistook your assiduity for assurance and your simplicity for allurements But it's over—This house I no more show *my* face in

60

MISS HARDCASTLE I hope, sir, I have done nothing to disoblige you I'm sure I should be sorry to affront any gentleman who has been so polite and said so many civil things to me I'm sure I should be sorry (*pretending to cry*) if he left the family upon my account I'm sure I should be sorry, people said any thing amiss, since I have no fortune but my character

MARLOW (*Aside*) By heaven she weeps This is the first mark of tenderness I ever had from a modest woman, and it touches me (*To her*) Excuse me my lovely girl you are the only part of the family I leave with reluctance But to be plain with you the difference of our birth fortune and education make an honorable connection impossible and I can never harbor a thought of seducing simplicity that trusted in my honor or bringing ruin upon one whose only fault was being too lovely

70

MISS HARDCASTLE (*Aside*) Generous man! I now begin to admire him (*To him*) But I'm sure my family is as good as Miss Hardcastle's and though I'm poor that's no great misfortune to a contented mind and until this moment I never thought that it was bad to want fortune

80

MARLOW And why now my pretty simplicity?

MISS HARDCASTLE Because it puts me at a distance from one that if I had a thousand pound I would give it all to

MARLOW (*Aside*) This simplicity bewitches me so that if I stay I'm undone I must make one bold effort and leave her (*To her*) Your partiality in my favor, my dear touches me most sensibly and were I to live for myself alone I could easily fix my choice But I owe too much to the opinion of the world, too much to the authority of a father so that—I can scarcely speak it—it affects me Farewell

90

*Exit*

MISS HARDCASTLE I never knew half his merit till now He shall not go if I have power or art to detain him I'll still preserve the character in which I stooped to conquer but will undeceive my papa who perhaps, may laugh him out of his resolution

100

*Exit*

*Enter TONY, MISS NEVILLE*

TONY Ay, you may steal for yourselves the next time I have done my duty She has got the jewels again that's a sure thing but she believes it was all a mistake of the servants

MISS NEVILLE But my dear cousin, sure you won't forsake us in this distress If she in the least suspects that I am going off I shall certainly be locked up or sent to my Aunt Pedigree's which is ten times worse

110

TONY To be sure aunts of all kinds are damned bad things But what can I do? I have got you a

pair of horses that will fly like Whistlejacket and I'm sure you can't say but I have counted you nicely before her face Here she comes we must count a bit or two more for fear she should suspect us  
(*They retire, and seem to fondle*)

Enter MRS HARDCASTLE

MRS HARDCASTLE Well I was greatly fluttered to be sure But my son tells me it was all a mistake of the servants I shan't be easy however until they  
10 are fairly married and then let her keep her own fortune But what do I see! Fondling together as I'm alive I never saw Tony so sprightly before Ah! have I caught you my pretty doves? What billing exchanging stolen glances and broken murmurs Ah!

TONY As for murmurs mother we grumble a little now and then to be sure But there's no love lost between us

MRS HARDCASTLE A mere sprinkling Tony upon the flame only to make it burn brighter

MISS NEVILLE Cousin Tony promises to give us more of his company at home Indeed he shan't leave us any more It won't leave us cousin Tony will it?

TONY Oh! it's a pretty creature No I'd sooner leave my horse in a pound than leave you when you smile upon one so Your laugh makes you so becoming

MISS NEVILLE Agreeable cousin! Who can help  
30 admiring that natural humor that pleasant broad red, thoughtless (*patting his cheek*) ah! it's a bold face

MRS HARDCASTLE Pretty innocence!

TONY I'm sure I always loved cousin Con's hazel eyes and her pretty long fingers that she twists this way and that over the hasp cholls like a parcel of bobbins

MRS HARDCASTLE Ah he would charm the bird from the tree I was never so happy before My boy  
40 takes after his father poor Mr Lumpkin exactly The jewels, my dear Con, shall be yours momentarily You shall have them Isn't he a sweet boy my dear? You shall be married tomorrow and we'll put off the rest of his education like Dr Drowsy's sermons to a fitter opportunity

Enter DIGGORY

DIGGORY Where's the squire? I have got a letter for your worship

TONY Give it to my mamma She reads all my  
50 letters first

DIGGORY I had orders to deliver it into your own hands

TONY Who does it come from?

DIGGORY Your worship must ask that of the letter itself  
Exit

TONY I could wish to know though

(*Turning the letter and gazing on it*)

MISS NEVILLE (*Aside*) Undone undone A letter to him from Hastings I know the hand If my aunt sees it we're ruined for ever I'll keep her employed a little if I can (*To MRS HARDCASTLE*) But I have not told you madam of my cousin's smart answer just now to Mr Murlow We so laughed—You must know, madam—this way a little for he must not hear us  
(*They confer*)

TONY (*Still gazing*) A damned cramp piece of penmanship as ever I saw in my life I can read your print hand very well But here there are such handles and shanks and dashes that one can scarce tell the head from the tail *To Anthony Lumpkin Esquire* It's very odd I can read the outside of my letters where my own name is well enough But when I come to open it it's all—buzz That's hard very hard for the inside of the letter is always the cream of the correspondence

MRS HARDCASTLE Ha! ha! ha! Very well very well! And so my son was too hard for the philosopher

MISS NEVILLE Yes madam but you must hear the rest madam A little more this way or he may hear us You'll hear how he puzzled him again

MRS HARDCASTLE He seems strangely puzzled now himself methinks

TONY (*Still gazing*) A damned up and-down hand as if it was disguised in liquor (*Reading*) Dear Sir Ay that's that Then there's an M and a T and an S but whether the next be anizzard or an R, confound me I cannot tell

MRS HARDCASTLE What's that my dear? Can I give you any assistance?

MISS NEVILLE Pray aunt let me read it Nobody reads a cramp hand better than I (*Twisting the letter from her*) Do you know who it is from?

TONY Can't tell except from Dick Ginger the feeder

MISS NEVILLE Ay so it is (*Pretending to read*) Dear Squire Hoping that you're in health as I am at this present The gentlemen of the Shake bag club has cut the gentlemen of Coose-green quite out of feather The odds—um—odd battle—um—long fighting—um here here it's all about cocks and fighting it's of no consequence here, put it up put it up (*Thrusting the crumpled letter upon him*)

TONY But I tell you miss it's of all the consequence in the world I would not lose the rest of it for a guinea Here mother do you make it out Of no consequence!

(*Giving MRS HARDCASTLE the letter*)

MRS HARDCASTLE How's this! (*Reads*) Dear Squire I'm now waiting for Miss Neville with a post chaise and pair at the bottom of the garden, but I find my horses yet unable to perform the journey I

expect you'll assist us with a pair of fresh horses as you promised. Dispatch is necessary, as the *hag* (ay the *hag*) your mother will otherwise suspect us. Yours, Hastings. Giant me patience. I shall run distracted! My rage chokes me!

MISS NEVILLE I hope madam, you'll suspend your resentment for a few moments and not impute to me any impertinence or sinister design that belongs to another.

10 MRS. HARDCASTLE (*Cutsyng very low*) Fine spoken madam, you are most miraculously polite and engaging and quite the very pink of courtesy and circumspection madam (*Changing her tone*). And you, you great ill-fashioned oaf with scarce sense enough to keep your mouth shut. Were you too joined against me? But I'll defeat all your plots in a moment. As for you, madam, since you have got a pair of fresh horses ready, it would be cruel to disappoint them. So if you please instead of running away with your spack, prepare this very moment to run off with me. Your old Aunt Pedigree will keep you secure. I'll warrant me. You too, sir, may mount your horse and guard us upon the way. Here, Thomas, Roger Diggory! I'll show you that I wish you better than you do yourselves. *Exit*

MISS NEVILLE So now I'm completely ruined.

TONY Ay, that's a sure thing.

MISS NEVILLE What better could be expected from being connected with such a stupid fool and after all the nods and signs I made him.

30 TONY By the laws, miss, it was your own cleverness and not my stupidity that did your business. You were so nice and so busy with your Shake bags and Goose greens that I thought you could never be making believe.

*Enter HASTINGS*

HASTINGS So, sir, I find by my servant, that you have shown my letter and betrayed us. Was this well done, young gentleman?

40 TONY Here's another. Ask miss there who he betrayed you. Ecod, it was her doing, not mine.

*Enter MARLOW*

MARLOW So I have been finely used here among you. Rendered contemptible, driven into ill manners, despised, insulted, laughed at.

TONY Here's another. We shall have old Bedlam broke loose presently.

MISS NEVILLE And there, sir, is the gentleman to whom we all owe every obligation.

50 MARLOW What can I say to him, a mere boy and idiot, whose ignorance and age are a protection.

HASTINGS A poor contemptible booby that would but disgrace correction.

MISS NEVILLE Yet with cunning and malice enough to make himself merry with all our embarrassments.

HASTINGS An insensible cub.

MARLOW Replete with tricks and mischief.

TONY Baw! damme, but I'll fight you both one after the other—with baskets.

MARLOW As for him, he's below resentment. But your conduct, Mr. Hastings, requires an explanation. You knew of my mistakes, yet would not undeceive me. 60

HASTINGS Tortured as I am with my own disappointments, is this a time for explanations? It is not friendly, Mr. Marlow.

MARLOW But, sir—

MISS NEVILLE Mr. Marlow, we never kept on your mistake till it was too late to undeceive you. Be pacified. 70

*Enter SERVANT*

SERVANT My mistress desires you'll get ready immediately, madam. The horses are putting to. Your hat and things are in the next room. We are to go thirty miles before morning. *Exit*

MISS NEVILLE Well, well, I'll come presently.

MARLOW (*To HASTINGS*) Was it well done, sir, to assist in rendering me ridiculous? To hang me out for the scorn of all my acquaintance? Depend upon it, sir, I shall expect an explanation. 80

HASTINGS Was it well done, sir, if you're upon that subject to deliver what I entrusted to yourself to the care of another, sir?

MISS NEVILLE Mr. Hastings! Mr. Marlow! Why will you increase my distress by this groundless dispute? I implore, I intreat you—

*Enter SERVANT*

SERVANT Your cloak, madam. My mistress is impatient.

MISS NEVILLE I come. (*Exit SERVANT*) Pray be pacified. If I leave you thus, I shall die with apprehension. 90

*Enter SERVANT*

SERVANT Your fan, muff, and gloves, madam. The horses are waiting.

MISS NEVILLE Oh, Mr. Marlow! if you knew what a scene of constraint and ill-nature lies before me, I'm sure it would convert your resentment into pity.

MARLOW I'm so distracted with a variety of passions that I don't know what I do. Forgive me, madam, George, forgive me. You know my hasty temper and should not exasperate it. 100

HASTINGS The torture of my situation is my only excuse.

MISS NEVILLE Well, my dear Hastings, if you have that esteem for me that I think, that I am sure you have your constancy for three years will but increase the happiness of our future connection. If—

MRS. HARDCASTLE (*Within*) Miss Neville! Constance, why Constance, I say! 110



MISS NEVILLE I'm coming Well, constancy Remember constancy is the word *Exit*

HASTINGS My heart! How can I support this To be so near happiness and such happiness

MARLOW (*To TONY*) You see now, young gentleman the effects of your folly What might be amusement to you is here disappointment and even distress

TONY (*From a reverie*) Ecod I have hit it It's here Your hands Yours and yours my poor Sulky My boots there ho! Meet me two hours hence at the bottom of the garden and if you don't find Tony Lumpkin a more good natured fellow than you thought for I'll give you leave to take my best horse and Bet Bouncer into the bargain Come along My boots, ho! *Exeunt*

## ACT V

### SCENE I *The house*

*Enter HASTINGS and SERVANT*

HASTINGS You saw the old lady and Miss Neville drive off you say?

SERVANT Yes your honor They went off in a post coach and the young squire went on horseback They're thirty miles off by this time

HASTINGS Then all my hopes are over

SERVANT Yes, sir Old Sir Charles is arrived He and the old gentleman of the house have been laughing at Mr Marlow's mistake this half hour They are coming this way

HASTINGS Then I must not be seen So now to my fruitless appointment at the bottom of the garden This is about the time *Exit*

*Enter SIR CHARLES and HARDCASTLE*

HARDCASTLE Ha! ha! ha! The peremptory tone in which he sent forth his sublime commands

SIR CHARLES And the reserve with which I suppose he treated all your advances

HARDCASTLE And yet he might have seen something in me above a common innkeeper, too

SIR CHARLES Yes Dick but he mistook you for an uncommon innkeeper ha! ha! ha!

HARDCASTLE Well, I'm in too good spirits to think of any thing but joy Yes my dear friend, this union of our families will make our personal friendships hereditary and though my daughter's fortune is but small—

SIR CHARLES Why, Dick, will you talk of fortune to me My son is possessed of more than a competence already and can want nothing but a good and virtuous girl to share his happiness and increase it If they like each other as you say they do—

HARDCASTLE If man! I tell you they *do* like each other My daughter as good as told me so

SIR CHARLES But girls are apt to flatter themselves you know

HARDCASTLE I saw him grasp her hand in the warmest manner myself and here he comes to put you out of your *ifs* I warrant him

*Enter MARLOW*

MARLOW I come, sir once more to ask your pardon for my strange conduct I can scarce reflect on my insolence without confusion

HARDCASTLE Tut boy a trifle You take it too gravely An hour or two's laughing with my daughter will set all to rights again She'll never like you the worse for it

MARLOW Sir I shall be always proud of her approbation

HARDCASTLE Approbation is but a cold word Mr Marlow if I am not deceived you have something more than approbation thereabouts You take me

MARLOW Really sir, I have not that happiness

HARDCASTLE Come boy I'm an old fellow and know what's what as well as you that are younger I know what has past between you but mum

MARLOW Sure sir nothing has past between us but the most profound respect on my side and the most distant reserve on hers You don't think sir that my impudence has been past upon all the rest of the family?

HARDCASTLE Impudence! No I don't say that—Not quite impudence—Though girls like to be played with and ruffled a little too sometimes But she has told no tales I assure you

MARLOW I never gave her the slightest cause

HARDCASTLE Well well I like modesty in its place well enough But this is over acting young gentleman You may be open Your father and I will like you the better for it

MARLOW May I die, sir if I ever—

HARDCASTLE I tell you she don't dislike you and as I'm sure you like her—

MARLOW Dear sir—I protest sir—

HARDCASTLE I see no reason why you should not be joined as fast as the parson can tie you

MARLOW But hear me sir—

HARDCASTLE Your father approves the match, I admire it every moment's delay will be doing mischief so—

MARLOW But why won't you hear me? By all that's just and true I never gave Miss Hardcastle the slightest mark of my attachment, or even the most distant hint to suspect me of affection We had but one interview and that was formal, modest and uninteresting

HARDCASTLE (*Aside*) This fellow's formal, modest impudence is beyond bearing

SIR CHARLES And you never grasped her hand, or made any protestations!

MARLOW As heaven is my witness I came down in obedience to your commands I saw the lady without emotion and parted without reluctance I hope you'll exact no further proofs of my duty nor prevent me from leaving a house in which I suffer so many mortifications *Exit*

10 SIR CHARLES I'm astonished at the air of sincerity with which he parted

HARDCASTLE And I'm astonished at the deliberate intrepidity of his assurance

SIR CHARLES I dare pledge my life and honor upon his truth

HARDCASTLE Here comes my daughter and I would stake my happiness upon her veracity

*Enter MISS HARDCASTLE*

20 HARDCASTLE Kate come hither, child Answer us sincerely, and without reserve Has Mr Marlow made you any professions of love and affection?

MISS HARDCASTLE The question is very abrupt sir! But since you require unreserved sincerity I think he has

HARDCASTLE (*To SIR CHARLES*) You see

SIR CHARLES And pray madam, have you and my son had more than one interview?

MISS HARDCASTLE Yes sir, several

HARDCASTLE (*To SIR CHARLES*) You see

SIR CHARLES But did he profess any attachment?

30 MISS HARDCASTLE A lasting one

SIR CHARLES Did he talk of love?

MISS HARDCASTLE Much sir

SIR CHARLES Amazing! And all this formally?

MISS HARDCASTLE Formally

HARDCASTLE Now my friend I hope you are satisfied

SIR CHARLES And how did he behave madam?

MISS HARDCASTLE As most professed admirers do I find some civil things of my face talked much of his want of merit and the greatness of mine mentioned his heart, and gave a short tragedy speech and ended with pretended rapture

SIR CHARLES Now I'm perfectly convinced indeed I know his conversation among women to be modest and submissive This forward canting ranting manner by no means describes him and I am confident he never sat for the picture

MISS HARDCASTLE Then what sir if I should convince you to your face of my sincerity? If you and my papa in about half an hour will place yourselves behind that screen you shall hear him declare his passion to me in person

SIR CHARLES Agreed And if I find him what you describe, all my happiness in him must have an end

*Exit*

MISS HARDCASTLE And if you don't find him what

I describe—I fear my happiness must never have a beginning *Exeunt*

SCENE II *Scene changes to the back of the garden*

*Enter HASTINGS*

60

HASTINGS What an idiot am I to wait here for a fellow who probably takes delight in mortifying me He never intended to be punctual, and I'll wait no longer What do I see! It is he, and perhaps with news of my Constance

*Enter TONY booted and spattered*

HASTINGS My honest squire! I now find you a man of your word This looks like friendship

TONY Ay I'm your friend and the best friend you have in the world if you knew but all This riding by night by the bye is curiously tiresome It has shook me worse than the basket of a stage coach

HASTINGS But how? Where did you leave your fellow travellers? Are they in safety? Are they housed?

TONY Five and twenty miles in two hours and a half is no such bad driving The poor beasts have smoked for it Rabbit me but I'd rather ride forty miles after a fox than ten with such varment

HASTINGS Well but where have you left the ladies? I die with impatience

TONY Left them? Why where should I leave them but where I found them?

HASTINGS This is a riddle

TONY Riddle me this then What's that goes round the house and round the house, and never touches the house?

HASTINGS I'm still astray

TONY Why that's it mon I have led them astray By jingo there's not a pond or slough within five miles of the place but they can tell the taste of

HASTINGS Ha ha ha I understand, you took them in a round while they supposed themselves going forward And so you have at last brought them home again

TONY You shall hear I first took them down Feather bed-lane where we stuck fast in the mud I then rattled them crack over the stones of Up and down Hill—I then introduced them to the gibbet on Heavy tree Heath and from that, with a circum bendibus I fairly lodged them in the horse-pond at the bottom of the garden

HASTINGS But no accident, I hope

TONY No no! Only mother is confoundedly frightened She thinks herself forty miles off She's sick of the journey and the cattle can scarce crawl So if your own horses be ready, you may whip off with cousin and I'll be bound that no soul here can budge a foot to follow you

100

HASTINGS My dear friend how can I be grateful?

TONY Ay, now it's dear friend noble squire  
Just now it was all idiot cub and run me  
through the guts Damn *your* way of fighting I say  
After we take a knock in this part of the country we  
kiss and be friends But if you had run me through  
the guts then I should be dead and you might go  
kiss the hangman

HASTINGS The rebuke is just But I must hasten to  
relieve Miss Neville if you keep the old lady em-  
ployed, I promise to take care of the young one

*Exit*

TONY Never fear me Here she comes Vanish  
Shes got from the pond and diaggled up to the  
waist like a mermaid

*Enter* MRS. HARDCASTLE

MRS. HARDCASTLE Oh Tony I'm killed! Shook!  
Battered to death! I shall never survive it That last  
jolt that laid us against the quickest hedge has done  
my business

TONY Alack, mamma it was all your own fault  
You would be for running away by night without  
knowing one inch of the way

MRS. HARDCASTLE I wish we were at home again  
I never met so many accidents in so short a journey  
Drenched in the mud overturned in a ditch, stuck  
fast in a slough jolted to a jelly, and at last to lose  
our way Whereabouts do you think we are Tony?

TONY By my guess we should be upon Crackskull  
common, about forty miles from home

MRS. HARDCASTLE O lud! O lud! the most notori-  
ous spot in all the country We only want a robbery  
to make a complete night on t

TONY Don't be afraid mamma, don't be afraid  
Two of the five that kept here are hanged and the  
other three may not find us Don't be afraid Is that a  
man that's galloping behind us? No, it's only a tree  
Don't be afraid

MRS. HARDCASTLE The fright will certainly kill me

TONY Do you see anything like a black hat mov-  
ing behind the thicket?

MRS. HARDCASTLE O death!

TONY No it's only a cow Don't be afraid mamma  
don't be afraid!

MRS. HARDCASTLE As I'm alive, Tony I see a man  
coming towards us Ah, I'm sure on t If he perceives  
us we are undone

TONY (*Aside*) Father in law by all that's un-  
lucky come to take one of his night walks (*To her*)  
Ah it's a highwayman with pistols as long as my  
arm A damned ill-looking fellow

MRS. HARDCASTLE Good heaven defend us! He ap-  
proaches!

TONY Do you hide yourself in that thicket and  
leave me to manage him If there be danger, I'll

cough and cry *hem* When I cough be sure to keep  
close

(*MRS. HARDCASTLE hides behind a tree  
in the back scene*)

*Enter* HARDCASTLE

HARDCASTLE I'm mistaken or I heard voices of  
people in want of help Oh Tony, is that you? I did  
not expect you so soon back Are your mother and  
her charge in safety?

TONY Very safe sir at my Aunt Pedigree's Hem

MRS. HARDCASTLE (*From behind*) Ah, death! I  
find there's danger

HARDCASTLE Forty miles in three hours, sure  
that's too much my youngster

TONY Stout hoises and willing minds make short  
journeys as they say Hem

MRS. HARDCASTLE (*From behind*) Sure he'll do  
the dear boy no harm

HARDCASTLE But I heard a voice here, I should be  
glad to know from whence it came?

TONY It was I sir, talking to myself sir I was  
saying that forty miles in four hours was very good  
going Hem! As to be sure it was Hem! I have got  
a sort of cold by being out in the air Well go in if  
you please Hem!

HARDCASTLE But if you talk'd to yourself, you did  
not answer yourself I am certain I heard two voices  
and am resolved (*raising his voice*) to find the other  
out

MRS. HARDCASTLE (*From behind*) Oh! he's com-  
ing to find me out Oh!

TONY What need you go sir, if I tell you? Hem  
I'll lay down my life for the truth—hem—I'll tell  
you all sir (*Detaining him*)

HARDCASTLE I tell you I will not be detained I  
insist on seeing It's in vain to expect I'll believe you

MRS. HARDCASTLE (*Running forward from be-  
hind*) O lud, he'll murder my poor boy, my darling  
Here, good gentleman, whet your rage upon me  
Take my money, my life but spare that young gen-  
tleman, spare my child, if you have any mercy!

HARDCASTLE My wife! as I'm a Christian From  
whence can she come, or what does she mean?

MRS. HARDCASTLE (*Kneeling*) Take compassion  
on us good Mr Highwayman Take our money our  
watches, all we have but spare our lives We will  
never bring you to justice indeed we won't good  
Mr Highwayman

HARDCASTLE I believe the woman's out of her  
senses What Dorothy, don't you know *me*?

MRS. HARDCASTLE Mr Hardcastle, as I'm alive!  
My fears blinded me But who my dear, could have  
expected to meet you here in this frightful place so  
far from home? What has brought you to follow us?

HARDCASTLE Sure, Dorothy, you have not lost your  
wits So far from home, when you are within forty

yards of your own door (To him) This is one of your old tricks you graceless rogue you (To her) Don't you know the gate, and the mulberry tree, and don't you remember the horse pond my dear?

MRS HARDCASTLE Yes I shall remember the horse pond as long as I live I have caught my death in it (To TONY) And is it to you, you graceless varlet, I owe all this? I'll teach you to abuse your mother, I will

10 TONY Ecod, mother, all the parish says you have spoiled me and so you may take the fruits on't

MRS HARDCASTLE I'll spoil you I will

*Follows him off stage Exit*

HARDCASTLE There's morality, however, in his reply *Exit*

*Enter HASTINGS and MISS NEVILLE*

HASTINGS My dear Constance, why will you deliberate thus? If we delay a moment, all is lost for ever Pluck up a little resolution, and we shall soon be out of reach of her malignity

20 MISS NEVILLE I find it impossible My spirits are so sunk with the agitations I have suffered that I am unable to face any new danger Two or three years patience will at last crown us with happiness

HASTINGS Such a tedious delay is worse than inconstancy Let us fly my charmer Let us date our happiness from this very moment Perish fortune Love and content will increase what we possess beyond a monarch's revenue Let me prevail

30 MISS NEVILLE No, Mr Hastings, no Prudence once more comes to my relief, and I will obey its dictates In the moment of passion, fortune may be despised but it produces a lasting repentance I'm resolved to apply to Mr Hardcastle's compassion and justice for redress

HASTINGS But though he has the will he has not the power to relieve you

MISS NEVILLE But he has influence and upon that I am resolved to rely

40 HASTINGS I have no hopes But since you persist, I must reluctantly obey you *Exeunt*

SCENE III *Scene changes to the parlor*

*Enter SIR CHARLES and MISS HARDCASTLE*

SIR CHARLES What a situation am I in If what you say appears, I shall then find a guilty son If what he says be true, I shall then lose one that, of all others I most wished for a daughter

MISS HARDCASTLE I am proud of your approbation, and to show I merit it if you place yourselves as I directed, you shall hear his explicit declaration But he comes

50 SIR CHARLES I'll to your father and keep him to the appointment *Exit*

*Enter MARLOW*

MARLOW Though prepared for setting out, I come once more to take leave, nor did I till this moment know the pain I feel in the separation

MISS HARDCASTLE (In her own natural manner) I believe these sufferings cannot be very great sir which you can so easily remove A day or two longer perhaps might lessen your uneasiness by showing the little value of what you now think proper to regret

MARLOW (Aside) This girl every moment improves upon me (To her) It must not be, madam I have already trifled too long with my heart My very pride begins to submit to my passion The disparity of education and fortune, the anger of a parent and the contempt of my equals, begin to lose their weight, and nothing can restore me to myself but this painful effort of resolution

MISS HARDCASTLE Then go sir I'll urge nothing more to detain you Though my family be as good as hers you came down to visit and my education, I hope, not inferior, what are these advantages without equal affluence? I must remain contented with the slight approbation of imputed merit I must have only the mockery of your addresses, while all your serious aims are fixed on fortune

*Enter HARDCASTLE and SIR CHARLES from behind*

SIR CHARLES Here, behind this screen

HARDCASTLE Ay, ay, make no noise I'll engage my Kate covers him with confusion at last

MARLOW By heavens, madam, fortune was even my smallest consideration Your beauty at first caught my eye, for who could see that without emotion? But every moment that I converse with you steals in some new grace, heightens the picture and gives it stronger expression What at first seemed rustic plainness, now appears refined simplicity What seemed forward assurance, now strikes me as the result of courageous innocence, and conscious virtue

SIR CHARLES What can it mean! He amazes me!

HARDCASTLE I told you how it would be Hush!

MARLOW I am now determined to stay madam and I have too good an opinion of my father's discernment, when he sees you, to doubt his approbation

MISS HARDCASTLE No, Mr Marlow, I will not cannot detain you Do you think I could suffer a connection, in which there is the smallest room for repentance? Do you think I would take the mean advantage of a transient passion to load you with confusion? Do you think I could ever relish that happiness which was acquired by lessening yours?

MARLOW By all that's good, I can have no happiness but what's in your power to grant me Nor shall

I ever feel repentance but in not having seen your merits before I will stay even contrary to your wishes and though you should persist to shun me, I will make my respectful assiduities atone for the levity of my past conduct

MISS HARDCASTLE Sir I must entreat you'll desist As our acquaintance began so let it end, in indifference I might have given an hour or two to levity but seriously Mr Marlow do you think I could ever submit to a connection, where I must appear mercenary and *you* imprudent? Do you think I could ever catch at the confident addresses of a secure admirer?

MARLOW (*Kneeling*) Does this look like security? Does this look like confidence? No madam every moment that shows me your merit only serves to increase my diffidence and confusion Here let me continue—

SIR CHARLES I can hold it no longer! Charles Charles how hast thou deceived me! Is this your indifference your uninteresting conversation?

HARDCASTLE Your cold contempt your formal interview! What have you to say now?

MARLOW That I'm all amazement What can it mean!

HARDCASTLE It means that you can say and unsay things at pleasure That you can address a lady in private and deny it in public that you have one story for us and another for my daughter

MARLOW Daughter!—this lady your daughter!

HARDCASTLE Yes sir my only daughter My Kate, whose else should she be?

MARLOW Oh, the devil!

MISS HARDCASTLE Yes, sir that very identical tall squinting lady you were pleased to take me for (*Curtsying*) She that you addressed as the mild modest sentimental man of gravity, and the bold, forward agreeable Rattle of the Ladies Club ha ha, ha

MARLOW Zounds, there's no bearing this it's worse than death

MISS HARDCASTLE In which of your characters sir will you give us leave to address you? As the faltering gentleman with looks on the ground that speaks just to be heard and hates hypocrisy or the loud confident creature that keeps it up with Mrs Mantrap, and old Miss Biddy Buckskin, till three in the morning, ha, ha ha!

MARLOW Oh curse on my noisy head I never at tempted to be impudent yet that I was not taken down I must be gone

HARDCASTLE By the hand of my body but you shall not I see it was all a mistake and I am rejoiced to find it You shall not, sir I tell you I know she'll forgive you Won't you forgive him Kate? Well all forgive you Take courage man

*They retire, she tormenting him  
to the back scene*

*Enter* MRS HARDCASTLE TONY

MRS HARDCASTLE So, so they're gone off Let them go I care not

HARDCASTLE Who gone?

MRS HARDCASTLE My dutiful niece and her gentleman Mr Hastings from town He came down with our modest visitor here

SIR CHARLES Who my honest George Hastings? As worthy a fellow as lives and the girl could not have made a more prudent choice

HARDCASTLE Then by the hand of my body I'm proud of the connection

MRS HARDCASTLE Well if he has taken away the lady he has not taken her fortune that remains in this family to console us for her loss

HARDCASTLE Sure Dorothy, you would not be so mercenary?

MRS HARDCASTLE Ay that's my affair, not yours

HARDCASTLE But you know if your son, when of age refuses to marry his cousin her whole fortune is then at her own disposal

MRS HARDCASTLE Ay but he's not of age, and she has not thought proper to wait for his refusal

*Enter* HASTINGS and MISS NEVILLE

MRS HARDCASTLE (*Aside*) What! returned so soon? I begin not to like it

HASTINGS (*To* HARDCASTLE) For my late attempt to fly off with your niece let my present confusion be my punishment We are now come back to appeal from your justice to your humanity By her father's consent, I first paid her my addresses and our passions were first founded in duty

MISS NEVILLE Since his death I have been obliged to stoop to dissimulation to avoid oppression In an hour of levity I was ready even to give up my fortune to secure my choice But I'm now recovered from the delusion and hope from your tenderness what is denied me from a nearer connection

MRS HARDCASTLE Pshaw pshaw, this is all but the whining end of a modern novel

HARDCASTLE Be it what it will, I'm glad they're come back to reclaim their due Come hither, Tony boy Do you refuse this lady's hand whom I now offer you?

TONY What signifies my refusing? You know I can't refuse her till I'm of age, father

HARDCASTLE While I thought concealing your age boy, was likely to conduce to your improvement, I concurred with your mother's desire to keep it secret But since I find she turns it to a wrong use, I must now declare you have been of age these three months

TONY Of age! Am I of age father?

HARDCASTLE Above three months

TONY Then you'll see the first use I'll make of my

liberty (*Taking Miss NEVILLE'S hand*) Witness all men by these presents that I Anthony Lumpkin, Esquire of Blank place refuse you Constantia Neville, spinster of no place at all for my true and lawful wife So Constance Neville may marry whom she pleases, and Tony Lumpkin is his own man again!

SIR CHARLES O brave squire!

HASTINGS My worthy friend!

10 MRS HARDCASTLE My unfortunat offspring!

MARLOW Joy my dear George I give you joy sincerely And could I prevail upon my little tyrant here to be less arbitrary I should be the happiest man alive, if you would return me the favor

HASTINGS (*To Miss HARDCASTLE*) Come madam you are now driven to the very last scene of all your contrivances I know you like him I'm sure he loves you and you must and shall have him

20 HARDCASTLE (*Joining their hands*) And I say so too And Mr Malow, if she makes as good a wife as she has a daughter I don't believe you'll ever repent your bargain So now to supper tomorrow we shall gather all the poor of the parish about us and the Mistakes of the Night shall be crowned with a merry morning so boy, take her and as you have been mistaken in the mistress my wish is, that you may never be mistaken in the wife

## EPILOGUE

BY DR GOLDSMITH

30 *Spoken by Miss HARDCASTLE*

Well having stooped to conquer with success  
And gained a husband without aid from dress,  
Still as a Barmaid I could wish it too  
As I have conquered him to conquer you  
And let me say for all your resolution,  
That pretty Barmaids have done execution  
Our life is all a play composed to please,  
We have our exits and our entrances

40 The first act shows the simple country maid,  
Harmless and young of everything afraid  
Blushes when hired, and with unmeaning action,  
I hopes as how to give you satisfaction  
Her second act displays a livelier scene —  
The unblushing Barmaid of a country inn  
Who whisks about the house, at market caters  
Talks loud, coquets the guests, and scolds the waiters

50 Next the scene shifts to town, and there she soars  
The chop house toast of ogling *connoisseurs*  
On squares and cits she there displays her wits,  
And on the gridiron broils her lovers' hearts —  
And as she smiles her triumphs to complete  
Even Common Councilmen forget to eat  
The fourth act shows her wedded to the Squire

And madam now begins to hold it higher,  
Pretends to taste at Operas cries Caro,  
And quits her Nancy Dawson, for *Che Faro*  
Doats upon dancing and in all her pride  
Swims round the room, the Heinel of Cheapside  
Ogles and leers with artificial skill,  
Till having lost in age the power to kill  
She sits all night at cards and ogles at spadille  
Such through our lives the eventful history —  
The fifth and last act still remains for me  
The Barmaid now for your protection plays  
Turns female barrister and pleads for Bayes

60

## EPILOGUE

BY J CRADDOCK, ESQ

*Spoken by TONY LUMPKIN*

Well—now all's ended—and my comrades gone  
Pray what becomes of mother's nonly son? 70  
A hopeful blade—in town I'll fix my station  
And try to make a bluster in the nation  
As for my cousin Neville I renounce her  
Off—in a crack—I'll carry big Bet Bouncer  
Why should not I in the great world appear?  
I soon shall have a thousand pounds a year,  
No matter what a man may here inherit  
In London—gad they've some regard to spirit  
I see the horses prancing up the streets 80  
And big Bet Bouncer bobs to all she meets  
Then hoikes to jiggs and pastimes every night—  
Not to the plays—they say it a n't polite  
To Sadler's Wells perhaps, or operas go  
And once by chance to the roratorio  
Thus here and there for ever up and down  
We'll set the fashions too to half the town  
And then at auctions—money ne'er regard  
Buy pictures like the great ten pounds a yard  
Zounds we shall make these London gentry say, 90  
We know what's damn'd genteel, as well as they

## STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 What is the basic situation in the play? What is the significance of the title of the play?
- 2 What is the basic action of the play? How is it revealed to us?
- 3 How would you characterize the style and tone of the play? How do these differ from the other comedies?
- 4 What are the attitudes taken by the various characters toward women? toward the relations between the sexes marriage and love?
- 5 What are the faults of the characters in the play? What is Goldsmith's attitude toward these faults?
- 6 What kind of audience does a play of this sort demand?
- 7 What view of life does Goldsmith express in the play? How is it revealed to us?

# An Ideal Husband

*Oscar Wilde*

Oscar Wilde has suffered from his reputation as a diletante poseur and more devastating pervert he is not so much satirized in *Patience* (the satire by Gilbert and Sullivan) as savaged. But one wonders if the ill treatment he received was not so much because of his own sins alone as because he so brilliantly exposed the sins of a society as a whole not only in his comedies—where the exposure is sometimes obfuscated by the very brilliance of its expression—but in his more serious prose particularly his political writing. After the death of Sheridan English comedy was virtually snuffed out and the heavy hand of Victorian respectability—a seeming respectability as we know now that we have begun to get behind the false front—lay like a dead weight on the stage. But we owe to Wilde—among others of course—the restoration of the theatre as a living exciting force and while Shaw might have been powerful enough to have effected that reformation himself he was no doubt immeasurably helped by what Wilde had done before him. In a few years Wilde wrote four comedies—*Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892) *A Woman of No Importance* (1893) *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) which restored to the English theatre the wit and style of Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy. For three short years he enjoyed his triumph then disaster struck only a few weeks after the success of *Earnest* and he wrote no more for the stage. Respectability had triumphed but one wonders if the price which was paid was worth it.

## CHARACTERS

THE EARL OF CAVERSHAM	HAROLD <i>footman</i>
VISCOUNT GORING	LADY CHILTERN
SIR ROBERT CHILTERN	LADY MARKBY
VICOMTE DE NANJAC	COUNTESS OF BASILDON
MR. MONTFORD	MRS. MARCHMONT
PHIPPS	MISS MABEL CHILTERN
MASON	MRS. CHEVELEY
JAMES, <i>footman</i>	

## THE SCENES OF THE PLAY

ACT I The Octagon Room in Sir Robert Chiltern's House in Grosvenor Square  
 ACT II Morning-room in Sir Robert Chiltern's House  
 ACT III The Library of Lord Goring's House in Curzon Street  
 ACT IV Same as Act II

TIME—The Present

PLACE—London

The Action of the Play is completed within twenty-four hours

## ACT I

SCENE—*The octagon room at Sir Robert Chiltern's house in Grosvenor Square*

(*The room is brilliantly lighted and full of guests. At the top of the staircase stands Lady Chiltern, a woman of grave Greek beauty about twenty-seven years of age. She receives the guests as they come up. Over the well of the staircase hangs a great chandelier with wax lights which illumine a large eighteenth century French tapestry—representing the Triumph of Love from a design by Boucher—that is stretched on the staircase wall. On the right is the entrance to the music room. The sound of a string quartette is faintly heard. The entrance on the left leads to other reception rooms.* MRS. MARCHMONT and LADY BASILDON, two very pretty women, are seated together on a Louis Seize sofa. They are types of exquisite fragility. Their affectation of manner has a delicate charm. Watteau would have loved to paint them.)

MRS. MARCHMONT Going on to the Hartlocks to night, Olivia?

LADY BASILDON I suppose so. Are you?

MRS. MARCHMONT Yes. Horribly tedious parties they give, don't they?

LADY BASILDON Horribly tedious! Never know why I go. Never know why I go anywhere.

MRS. MARCHMONT I come here to be educated.

LADY BASILDON Ah! I hate being educated!

MRS. MARCHMONT So do I. It puts one almost on a level with the commercial classes, doesn't it? But dear Gertrude Chiltern is always telling me that I should have some serious purpose in life. So I come here to try to find one.

LADY BASILDON (*looking round through her lorgnette*) I don't see anybody here to-night whom one could possibly call a serious purpose. The man who took me in to dinner talked to me about his wife the whole time.

MRS. MARCHMONT How very trivial of him!

LADY BASILDON Terribly trivial! What did your man talk about?

MRS. MARCHMONT About myself.

LADY BASILDON (*languidly*) And were you interested?

MRS. MARCHMONT (*shaking her head*) Not in the smallest degree.

LADY BASILDON What martyrs we are, dear Margaret!



MRS MARCHMONT (*rising*) And how well it becomes us Olivia! (*They rise and go towards the music room* The VICOMTE DE NANJAC a young attache known for his neckties and his Anglomania approaches with a low bow and enters into conversation )

MASON (*announcing guests from the top of the staircase*) Mr and Lady Jane Barford Lord Caversham

10 Enter LORD CAVERSHAM an old gentleman of seventy wearing the riband and star of the Garter A fine Whig type Rather like a portrait by Lawrence

LORD CAVERSHAM Good evening Lady Chiltern! Has my good for nothing young son been here?

LADY CHILTERN (*smiling*) I don't think Lord Goring has arrived yet

MABEL CHILTERN (*coming up to LORD CAVERSHAM*) Why do you call Lord Goring good for nothing? (MABEL CHILTERN is a perfect example of the English type of prettiness, the apple blossom type She has all the fragrance and freedom of a flower There is ripple after ripple of sunlight in her hair, and the little mouth with its parted lips is expectant, like the mouth of a child She has the fascinating tyranny of youth and the astonishing courage of innocence To sane people she is not reminiscent of any work of art But she is really like a Tanagra statuette, and would be rather annoyed if she were told so )

LORD CAVERSHAM Because he leads such an idle life

MABEL CHILTERN How can you say such a thing? Why he rides in the Row at ten o'clock in the morning goes to the Opera three times a week changes his clothes at least five times a day and dines out every night of the season You don't call that leading an idle life do you?

LORD CAVERSHAM (*looking at her with a kindly twinkle in his eyes*) You are a very charming young lady!

MABEL CHILTERN How sweet of you to say that, Lord Caversham! Do come to us more often You know we are always at home on Wednesdays, and you look so well with your star!

LORD CAVERSHAM Never go anywhere now Sick of London society Shouldn't mind being introduced to my own tailor he always votes on the right side But object strongly to being sent down to dinner with my wife's milliner Never could stand Lady Caversham's bonnets

MABEL CHILTERN Oh, I love London society! I think it has immensely improved It is entirely composed now of beautiful idiots and brilliant lunatics Just what society should be

LORD CAVERSHAM Hum! Which is Goring? Beautiful idiot or the other thing?

MABEL CHILTERN (*gravely*) I have been obliged for the present to put Lord Goring into a class quite by himself But he is developing charmingly! 60

LORD CAVERSHAM Into what?

MABEL CHILTERN (*with a little curtsey*) I hope to let you know very soon Lord Caversham!

MASON (*announcing guests*) Lady Markby Mrs Cheveley

Enter LADY MARKBY and MRS CHEVELEY LADY MARKBY is a pleasant kindly popular woman with gray hair a la marquise and good lace MRS CHEVELEY who accompanies her is tall and rather slight Lips very thin and highly colored a line of scarlet on a pallid face Venetian red hair aquiline nose and long throat Rouge accentuates the natural paleness of her complexion Gray green eyes that move restlessly She is in heliotrope, with diamonds She looks rather like an orchid and makes great demands on one's curiosity In all her movements she is extremely graceful A work of art, on the whole but showing the influence of too many schools 80

LADY MARKBY Good evening dear Gertrude! So kind of you to let me bring my friend, Mrs Cheveley Two such charming women should know each other!

LADY CHILTERN (*advances towards MRS CHEVELEY with a sweet smile Then suddenly stops and bows rather distantly*) I think Mrs Cheveley and I have met before I did not know she had married a second time

LADY MARKBY (*genially*) Ah, nowadays people marry as often as they can, don't they? It is most fashionable (To DUCHESS OF MARYBOROUGH) Dear Duchess, and how is the Duke? Brain still weak I suppose? Well that is only to be expected is it not? His good father was just the same There is nothing like race is there? 90

MRS CHEVELEY (*playing with her fan*) But have we really met before, Lady Chiltern? I can't remember where I have been out of England for so long

LADY CHILTERN We were at school together, Mrs Cheveley 100

MRS CHEVELEY (*superciliously*) Indeed? I have forgotten all about my schooldays I have a vague impression that they were detestable

LADY CHILTERN (*coldly*) I am not surprised!

MRS CHEVELEY (*in her sweetest manner*) Do you know, I am quite looking forward to meeting your clever husband, Lady Chiltern Since he has been at the Foreign Office, he has been so much talked of in Vienna They actually succeed in spell

ing his name right in the newspapers That in itself is fame on the continent

LADY CHILTERN I hardly think there will be much in common between you and my husband Mrs Cheveley! (*Moves away*)

VICOMTE DE NANJAC Ah! cheie Madame, quelle surprise! I have not seen you since Berlin!

MRS CHEVELEY Not since Berlin, Vicomte Five years ago!

10 VICOMTE DE NANJAC And you are younger and more beautiful than ever How do you manage it?

MRS CHEVELEY By making it a rule only to talk to perfectly charming people like yourself

VICOMTE DE NANJAC Ah! you flatter me You butter me, as they say here

MRS CHEVELEY Do they say that here? How dreadful of them!

VICOMTE DE NANJAC Yes they have a wonderful language It should be more widely known

20 SIR ROBERT CHILTERN *enters* A man of forty, but looking somewhat younger Clean shaven with finely cut features dark haired and dark eyed A personality of mark Not popular—few personalities are But intensely admired by the few and deeply respected by the many The note of his manner is that of perfect distinction, with a slight touch of pride One feels that he is conscious of the success he has made in life A nervous temperament with a tired look The firmly chiseled mouth and chin contrast strikingly with the romantic expression in the deep set eyes The variance is suggestive of an almost complete separation of passion and intellect as though thought and emotion were each isolated in its own sphere through some violence of will power There is nervousness in the nostrils, and in the pale, thin pointed hands It would be inaccurate to call him picturesque Picturesqueness cannot survive the House of Commons But Vandyke would have liked to have painted his head

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SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Good evening, Lady Markby! I hope you have brought Sir John with you?

LADY MARKBY Oh! I have brought a much more charming person than Sir John Sir John's temper since he has taken seriously to politics has become quite unbearable Really, now that the House of Commons is trying to become useful, it does a great

50

deal of harm

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I hope not, Lady Markby At any rate we do our best to waste the public time don't we? But who is this charming person you have been kind enough to bring to us?

LADY MARKBY Her name is Mrs Cheveley! One of the Dorsetshire Cheveleys, I suppose But I really

don't know Families are so mixed nowadays In deed, as a rule, everybody turns out to be somebody else

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Mrs Cheveley? I seem to know the name 60

LADY MARKBY She has just arrived from Vienna

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Ah! yes I think I know whom you mean

LADY MARKBY Oh! she goes everywhere there and has such pleasant scandals about all her friends I really must go to Vienna next winter I hope there is a good chef at the Embassy

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN If there is not the Ambassador will certainly have to be recalled Pray point out Mrs Cheveley to me I should like to see her 70

LADY MARKBY Let me introduce you (*To MRS CHEVELEY*) My dear Sir Robert Chiltern is dying to know you!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*bowing*) Everybody is dying to know the brilliant Mrs Cheveley Our attaches at Vienna write to us about nothing else

MRS CHEVELEY Thank you Sir Robert An acquaintance that begins with a compliment is sure to develop into a real friendship It starts in the right manner And I find that I know Lady Chiltern already 80

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Really?

MRS CHEVELEY Yes She has just reminded me that we were at school together I remember it perfectly now She always got the good conduct prize I have a distinct recollection of Lady Chiltern always getting the good conduct prize!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*smiling*) And what prizes did you get Mrs Cheveley? 90

MRS CHEVELEY My prizes came a little later on in life I don't think any of them were for good conduct I forget!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I am sure they were for something charming!

MRS CHEVELEY I don't know that women are always rewarded for being charming I think they are usually punished for it! Certainly, more women grow old nowadays through the faithfulness of their admirers than through anything else! At least that is the only way I can account for the terribly haggard look of most of your pretty women in London! 100

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN What an appalling philosophy that sounds! To attempt to classify you Mrs Cheveley, would be an impertinence But may I ask at heart, are you an optimist or a pessimist? Those seem to be the only two fashionable religions left to us nowadays

MRS CHEVELEY Oh I'm neither Optimism begins in a broad grin, and Pessimism ends with blue spectacles Besides, they are both of them merely poses 110

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN You prefer to be natural?

MRS CHEVELEY Sometimes But it is such a very difficult pose to keep up

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN What would those modern psychological novelists of whom we hear so much say to such a theory as that?

MRS CHEVELEY Ah! the strength of women comes from the fact that psychology cannot explain us Men can be analyzed, women merely adored

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN You think science cannot grapple with the problem of women?

MRS CHEVELEY Science can never grapple with the irrational That is why it has no future before it in this world

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN And women represent the irrational

MRS CHEVELEY Well-dressed women do

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*with a polite bow*) I fear I could hardly agree with you there But do sit down And now tell me, what makes you leave your brilliant Vienna for our gloomy London—oh perhaps the question is indiscreet?

MRS CHEVELEY Questions are never indiscreet Answers sometimes are

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Well at any rate may I know if it is politics or pleasure?

MRS CHEVELEY Politics are my only pleasure You see nowadays it is not fashionable to flirt till one is forty, or to be romantic till one is forty five, so we poor women who are under thirty or say we are, have nothing open to us but politics or philanthropy And philanthropy seems to me to have become simply the refuge of people who wish to annoy their fellow creatures I prefer politics I think they are more becoming!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN A political life is a noble career!

MRS CHEVELEY Sometimes And sometimes it is a clever game, Sir Robert And sometimes it is a great nuisance

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Which do you find it?

MRS CHEVELEY It's A combination of all three (*Drops her fan*)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*picks up fan*) Allow me!

MRS CHEVELEY Thanks

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN But you have not told me yet what makes you honor London so suddenly Our season is almost over

MRS CHEVELEY Oh! I don't care about the London season! It is too matrimonial People are either hunting for husbands or hiding from them I wanted to meet you It is quite true You know what a woman's curiosity is Almost as great as a man's! I wanted immensely to meet you, and to ask you to do something for me

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I hope it is not a little

thing Mrs Cheveley I find that little things are so very difficult to do

MRS CHEVELEY (*after a moment's reflection*) No I don't think it is quite a little thing

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I am so glad Do tell me what it is

MRS CHEVELEY Later on (*Rises*) And now may I walk through your beautiful house? I hear your pictures are charming Poor Baron Arnheim—you remember the Baron?—used to tell me you had some wonderful Corots

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*with an almost imperceptible start*) Did you know Baron Arnheim well?

MRS CHEVELEY (*smiling*) Intimately Did you?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN At one time

MRS CHEVELEY Wonderful man, wasn't he?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*after a pause*) He was very remarkable in many ways

MRS CHEVELEY I often think it such a pity he never wrote his memoirs They would have been most interesting

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Yes, he knew men and cities well like the old Greek

MRS CHEVELEY Without the dreadful disadvantage of having a Penelope waiting at home for him

MASON Lord Goring

*Enter LORD GORING Thirty four, but always says he is younger A well bred, expressionless face He is clever, but would not like to be thought so A flawless dandy he would be annoyed if he were considered romantic He plays with life and is on perfectly good terms with the world He is fond of being misunderstood It gives him a post of vantage*

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Good evening my dear Arthur! Mrs Cheveley allow me to introduce to you Lord Goring the idlest man in London

MRS CHEVELEY I have met Lord Goring before

LORD GORING (*bowing*) I did not think you would remember me Mrs Cheveley

MRS CHEVELEY My memory is under admirable control And are you still a bachelor?

LORD GORING I believe so

MRS CHEVELEY How very romantic!

LORD GORING Oh! I am not at all romantic I am not old enough I leave romance to my seniors

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Lord Goring is the result of Boodle's Club Mrs Cheveley

MRS CHEVELEY He reflects every credit on the institution

LORD GORING May I ask are you staying in London long?

MRS CHEVELEY That depends partly on the weather partly on the cooking and partly on Sir Robert

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN You are not going to plunge us into a European war I hope?

MRS CHEVELEY There is no danger at present! *(She nods to LORD GORING with a look of amusement in her eyes and goes out with SIR ROBERT CHILTERN LORD GORING saunters over to MABEL CHILTERN )*

MABEL CHILTERN You are very late!

LORD GORING Have you missed me?

10 MABEL CHILTERN Awfully!

LORD GORING Then I am sorry I did not stay away longer I like being missed

MABEL CHILTERN How very selfish of you!

LORD GORING I am very selfish

MABEL CHILTERN You are always telling me of your bad qualities Lord Goring

LORD GORING I have only told you half of them as yet, Miss Mabel!

MABEL CHILTERN Are the others very bad?

20 LORD GORING Quite dreadful! When I think of them at night I go to sleep at once

MABEL CHILTERN Well I delight in your bad qualities I wouldn't have you part with one of them

LORD GORING How very nice of you! But then you are always nice By the way, I want to ask you a question, Miss Mabel Who brought Mrs Cheveley here? That woman in heliotrope who has just gone out of the room with your brother?

30 MABEL CHILTERN Oh, I think Lady Markby brought her Why do you ask?

LORD GORING I hadn't seen her for years that is all

MABEL CHILTERN What an absurd reason!

LORD GORING All reasons are absurd

MABEL CHILTERN What sort of woman is she?

LORD GORING Oh! a genius in the daytime and a beauty at night!

MABEL CHILTERN I dislike her already

40 LORD GORING That shows your admirable good taste

VICOMTE DE NANJAC *(approaching)* Ah, the English young lady is the dragon of good taste is she not? Quite the dragon of good taste

LORD GORING So the newspapers are always telling us

VICOMTE DE NANJAC I read all your English newspapers I find them so amusing

50 LORD GORING Then, my dear Nanjac you must certainly read between the lines

VICOMTE DE NANJAC I should like to, but my professor objects *(To MABEL CHILTERN)* May I have the pleasure of escorting you to the music room, Mademoiselle?

MABEL CHILTERN *(looking very disappointed)* Delighted, Vicomte quite delighted! *(Turning to*

LORD GORING ) Aren't you coming to the music room?

LORD GORING Not if there is any music going on Miss Mabel

60 MABEL CHILTERN *(severely)* The music is in German You would not understand it *(Goes out with the VICOMTE DE NANJAC LORD CAVERSHAM comes up to his son )*

LORD CAVERSHAM Well sir! what are you doing here? Wasting your life as usual! You should be in bed sir You keep too late hours! I heard of you the other night at Lady Rufford's dancing till four o'clock in the morning!

LORD GORING Only a quarter to four, father

70 LORD CAVERSHAM Can't make out how you stand London society The thing has gone to the dogs a lot of damned nobodies talking about nothing

LORD GORING I love talking about nothing father It is the only thing I know anything about

LORD CAVERSHAM You seem to me to be living entirely for pleasure

LORD GORING What else is there to live for father? Nothing ages like happiness

80 LORD CAVERSHAM You are heartless, sir very heartless!

LORD GORING I hope not, father Good evening Lady Basildon!

LADY BASILDON *(arching two pretty eyebrows)* Are you here? I had no idea you ever came to political parties!

LORD GORING I adore political parties They are the only place left to us where people don't talk politics

90 LADY BASILDON I delight in talking politics I talk them all day long But I can't bear listening to them I don't know how the unfortunate men in the House stand these long debates

LORD GORING By never listening

LADY BASILDON Really?

LORD GORING *(in his most serious manner)* Of course You see it is a very dangerous thing to listen If one listens one may be convinced and a man who allows himself to be convinced by an argument is a thoroughly unreasonable person

100 LADY BASILDON Ah! that accounts for so much in men that I have never understood and so much in women that their husbands never appreciate in them!

MRS MARCHMONT *(with a sigh)* Our husbands never appreciate anything in us We have to go to others for that!

LADY BASILDON *(emphatically)* Yes always to others have we not?

LORD GORING *(smiling)* And those are the views of the two ladies who are known to have the most admirable husbands in London

MRS MARCHMONT That is exactly what we

can't stand My Reginald is quite hopelessly faultless He is really unendurably so at times! There is not the smallest element of excitement in knowing him

LORD GORING How terrible! Really the thing should be more widely known!

LADY BASILDON Basildon is quite as bad he is as domestic as if he was a bachelor

10 MRS MARCHMONT (*pressing LADY BASILDON'S hand*) My poor Olivia! We have married perfect husbands and we are well punished for it

LORD GORING I should have thought it was the husbands who were punished

MRS MARCHMONT (*drawing herself up*) Oh dear no! They are as happy as possible! And as for trusting us it is tragic how much they trust us

LADY BASILDON Perfectly tragic!

LORD GORING Or comic Lady Basildon?

20 LADY BASILDON Certainly not comic Lord Goring How unkind of you to suggest such a thing!

MRS MARCHMONT I am afraid Lord Goring is in the camp of the enemy as usual I saw him talking to that Mrs Cheveley when he came in

LORD GORING Handsome woman Mrs Cheveley!

LADY BASILDON (*stiffly*) Please don't praise other women in our presence You might wait for us to do that!

LORD GORING I did wait

30 MRS MARCHMONT Well we are not going to praise her I hear she went to the Opera on Monday night and told Tommy Rufford at supper that as far as she could see, London society was entirely made up of dowdies and dandies

LORD GORING She is quite right too The men are all dowdies and the women are all dandies, aren't they?

MRS MARCHMONT (*after a pause*) Oh! do you really think that is what Mrs Cheveley meant?

40 LORD GORING Of course And a very sensible remark for Mrs Cheveley to make too

*Enter MABEL CHILTERN She joins the group*

MABEL CHILTERN Why are you talking about Mrs Cheveley? Everybody is talking about Mrs Cheveley! Lord Goring says—what did you say, Lord Goring, about Mrs Cheveley? Oh! I remember that she was a genius in the daytime and a beauty at night

LADY BASILDON What a horrid combination! So very unnatural!

50 MRS MARCHMONT (*in her most dreamy manner*) I like looking at geniuses and listening to beautiful people

LORD GORING Ah! that is morbid of you, Mrs Marchmont!

MRS MARCHMONT (*brightening to a look of real pleasure*) I am so glad to hear you say that

Marchmont and I have been married for seven years and he has never once told me that I was morbid Men are so painfully unobservant!

LADY BASILDON (*turning to her*) I have always said dear Margaret, that you were the most morbid person in London 60

MRS MARCHMONT Ah! but you are always sympathetic Olivia!

MABEL CHILTERN Is it morbid to have a desire for food? I have a great desire for food Lord Goring will you give me some supper?

LORD GORING With pleasure, Miss Mabel (*Moves away with her*)

MABEL CHILTERN How horrid you have been! You have never talked to me the whole evening! 70

LORD GORING How could I? You went away with the child diplomatist

MABEL CHILTERN You might have followed us Pursuit would have been only polite I don't think I like you at all this evening!

LORD GORING I like you immensely

MABEL CHILTERN Well I wish you'd show it in a more marked way! (*They go downstairs*)

MRS MARCHMONT Olivia I have a curious feeling of absolute faintness I think I should like some supper very much I know I should like some supper 80

LADY BASILDON I am positively dying for supper Margaret!

MRS MARCHMONT Men are so horribly selfish they never think of these things

LADY BASILDON Men are grossly material grossly material!

*The VICOMTE DE NANJAC enters from the music room with some other guests After having carefully examined all the people present, he approaches LADY BASILDON* 90

VICOMTE DE NANJAC May I have the honor of taking you down to supper Comtesse?

LADY BASILDON (*coldly*) I never take supper, thank you, Vicomte (*The VICOMTE is about to retire LADY BASILDON, seeing this rises at once and takes his arm*) But I will come down with you with pleasure 100

VICOMTE DE NANJAC I am so fond of eating! I am very English in all my tastes

LADY BASILDON You look quite English, Vicomte quite English (*They pass out MR MONTFORD, a perfectly groomed young dandy approaches MRS MARCHMONT*)

MR MONTFORD Like some supper, Mrs Marchmont?

MRS MARCHMONT (*languidly*) Thank you Mr Montford, I never touch supper (*Rises hastily and takes his arm*) But I will sit beside you, and watch you 110

MR MONTFORD I don't know that I like being watched when I am eating!

MRS MARCHMONT Then I will watch some one else

MR MONTFORD I don't know that I should like that either

MRS MARCHMONT (*severely*) Pray Mr Montford do not make these painful scenes of jealousy in public! (*They go downstairs with the other guests passing* SIR ROBERT CHILTERN and MRS CHEVELEY *who now enter*)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN And are you going to any of our country houses before you leave England Mrs Cheveley?

MRS CHEVELEY Oh, no! I can't stand your English house parties In England people actually try to be brilliant at breakfast That is so dreadful of them! Only dull people are brilliant at breakfast And then the family skeleton is always reading family prayers My stay in England really depends on you, Sir Robert (*Sits down on the sofa*)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*taking a seat beside her*) Seriously?

MRS CHEVELEY Quite seriously I want to talk to you about a great political and financial scheme about this Argentine Canal Company in fact

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN What a tedious practical subject for you to talk about, Mrs Cheveley!

MRS CHEVELEY Oh I like tedious practical subjects What I don't like are tedious practical people There is a wide difference Besides you are interested I know in International Canal schemes You were Lord Radley's secretary, weren't you when the Government bought the Suez Canal shares?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Yes But the Suez Canal was a very great and splendid undertaking It gave us our direct route to India It had imperial value It was necessary that we should have control This Argentine scheme is a commonplace Stock Exchange swindle

MRS CHEVELEY A speculation, Sir Robert! A brilliant, daring speculation

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Believe me, Mrs Cheveley it is a swindle Let us call things by their proper names It makes matters simpler We have all the information about it at the Foreign Office In fact I sent out a special Commission to inquire into the matter privately, and they report that the works are hardly begun and as for the money already subscribed no one seems to know what has become of it The whole thing is a second Panama, and with not a quarter of the chance of success that miserable affair ever had I hope you have not invested in it I am sure you are far too clever to have done that

MRS CHEVELEY I have invested very largely in it

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Who could have advised you to do such a foolish thing?

MRS CHEVELEY Your old friend—and mine

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Who?

MRS CHEVELEY Baron Arnheim

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*frowning*) Ah! yes I remember hearing at the time of his death that he had been mixed up in the whole affair

MRS CHEVELEY It was his last romance His last but one to do him justice

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*rising*) But you have not seen my Corots yet They are in the music-room Corots seem to go with music don't they? May I show them to you?

MRS CHEVELEY (*shaking her head*) I am not in a mood to night for silver twilights or rose pink dawns I want to talk business (*Motions to him with her fan to sit down beside her*)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I fear I have no advice to give you Mrs Cheveley except to interest yourself in something less dangerous The success of the Canal depends of course on the attitude of England and I am going to lay the report of the Commissioners before the House to-morrow night

MRS CHEVELEY That you must not do In your own interests Sir Robert, to say nothing of mine you must not do that

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*looking at her in wonder*) In my own interests? My dear Mrs Cheveley, what do you mean? (*Sits down beside her*)

MRS CHEVELEY Sir Robert I will be quite frank with you I want you to withdraw the report that you had intended to lay before the House on the ground that you have reasons to believe that the Commissioners have been prejudiced or misinformed or something Then I want you to say a few words to the effect that the Government is going to reconsider the question, and that you have reason to believe that the Canal if completed, will be of great international value You know the sort of things ministers say in cases of this kind A few ordinary platitudes will do In modern life nothing produces such an effect as a good platitude It makes the whole world kin Will you do this for me?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Mrs Cheveley, you can not be serious in making me such a proposition!

MRS CHEVELEY I am quite serious

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*coldly*) Pray allow me to believe that you are not!

MRS CHEVELEY (*speaking with great deliberation and emphasis*) Ah! but I am And, if you do what I ask you, I will pay you very handsomely!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Pay me!

MRS CHEVELEY Yes

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I am afraid I don't quite understand what you mean

MRS CHEVELEY (*leaning back on the sofa and looking at him*) How very disappointing! And I

have come all the way from Vienna in order that you should thoroughly understand me

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I fear I don't

MRS CHEVELEY (*in her most nonchalant manner*)

My dear Sir Robert you are a man of the world and you have your price I suppose Everybody has nowadays The drawback is that most people are so dreadfully expensive I know I am I hope you will be more reasonable in your terms

10 SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*rises indignantly*) If you will allow me I will call your carriage for you You have lived so long abroad Mrs Cheveley that you seem to be unable to realize that you are talking to an English gentleman

MRS CHEVELEY (*detains him by touching his arm with her fan, and keeping it there while she is talking*) I realize that I am talking to a man who laid the foundation of his fortune by selling to a Stock Exchange speculator a Cabinet secret

20 SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*biting his lip*) What do you mean?

MRS CHEVELEY (*rising and facing him*) I mean that I know the real origin of your wealth and your career, and I have got your letter too

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN What letter?

MRS CHEVELEY (*contemptuously*) The letter you wrote to Baron Arnheim when you were Lord Radley's secretary telling the Baron to buy Suez Canal shares—a letter written three days before the  
30 Government announced its own purchase

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*hoarsely*) It is not true

MRS CHEVELEY You thought that letter had been destroyed How foolish of you! It is in my possession

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN The affair to which you allude was no more than a speculation The House of Commons had not yet passed the bill, it might have been rejected

MRS CHEVELEY It was a swindle Sir Robert  
40 Let us call things by their proper names It makes everything simpler And now I am going to sell you that letter, and the price I ask for it is your public support of the Argentine scheme You made your own fortune out of one canal You must help me and my friends to make our fortunes out of another!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN It is infamous, what you propose—infamous!

MRS CHEVELEY Oh no! This is the game of life as we all have to play it, Sir Robert sooner or later!

50 SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I cannot do what you ask me

MRS CHEVELEY You mean you cannot help doing it You know you are standing on the edge of a precipice And it is not for you to make terms It is for you to accept them Supposing you refuse—

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN What then?

MRS CHEVELEY My dear Sir Robert what then?

You are ruined that is all! Remember to what a point your Puritanism in England has brought you In old days nobody pretended to be a bit better than his neighbors In fact to be a bit better than one's neighbor was considered excessively vulgar and middle class Nowadays, with our modern mania for morality every one has to pose as a paragon of purity incorruptibility and all the other seven deadly virtues—and what is the result? You all go over like ninepins—one after the other Not a year passes in England without somebody disappearing Scandals used to lend charm or at least interest to a man—now they crush him And yours is a very nasty scandal You couldn't survive it If it were known that as a young man secretary to a great and important minister, you sold a Cabinet secret for a large sum of money and that that was the origin of your wealth and career you would be hounded out of public life you would disappear completely And after all Sir Robert why should you sacrifice your entire future rather than deal diplomatically with your enemy? For the moment I am your enemy I admit it! And I am much stronger than you are  
80 The big battalions are on my side You have a splendid position but it is your splendid position that makes you so vulnerable You can't defend it! And I am in attack Of course I have not talked morality to you You must admit in fairness that I have spared you that Years ago you did a clever unscrupulous thing it turned out a great success You owe to it your fortune and position And now you have got to pay for it Sooner or later we all have to pay for what we do You have to pay now Before I leave you to night, you have got to promise me to suppress your report, and to speak in the House in favor of this scheme

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN What you ask is impossible

MRS CHEVELEY You must make it possible You are going to make it possible Sir Robert, you know what your English newspapers are like Suppose that when I leave this house I drive down to some newspaper office and give them this scandal and the proofs of it! Think of their loathsome joy of the delight they would have in dragging you down, of the mud and mire they would plunge you in Think of the hypocrite with his greasy smile penning his leading article, and arranging the foulness of the public placard  
100

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Stop! You want me to withdraw the report and to make a short speech stating that I believe there are possibilities in the scheme?

MRS CHEVELEY (*sitting down on the sofa*) Those are my terms  
110

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*in a low voice*) I will give you any sum of money you want



MRS CHEVELEY Even you are not rich enough Sir Robert to buy back your past No man is

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I will not do what you ask I will not

MRS CHEVELEY You have to If you don't  
(Rises from the sofa)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*bewildered and unnerved*) Wait a moment! What did you propose? You said that you would give me back my letter, didn't you?

MRS CHEVELEY Yes That is agreed I will be in the Ladies Gallery to-morrow night at half past eleven If by that time—and you will have had heaps of opportunity—you have made an announcement to the House in the terms I wish, I shall hand you back your letter with the prettiest thanks, and the best, or at any rate the most suitable compliment I can think of I intend to play quite fairly with you One should always play fairly when one has the winning cards The Baron taught me that amongst other things

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN You must let me have time to consider your proposal

MRS CHEVELEY No you must settle now!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Give me a week—three days!

MRS CHEVELEY Impossible! I have got to telegraph to Vienna to-night

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN My God! what brought you into my life?

MRS CHEVELEY Circumstances (*Moves towards the door*)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Don't go I consent The report shall be withdrawn I will arrange for a question to be put to me on the subject

MRS CHEVELEY Thank you I knew we should come to an amicable agreement I understood your nature from the first I analyzed you, though you did not adore me And now you can get my carriage for me Sir Robert I see the people coming up from supper and Englishmen always get romantic after a meal and that bores me dreadfully

(Exit SIR ROBERT CHILTERN)

Enter guests, LADY CHILTERN LADY MARKBY LORD CAVERSHAM LADY BASILDON MRS MARCHMONT, VICOMTE DE NANJAC MR MONTFORD

LADY MARKBY Well, dear Mrs Cheveley I hope you have enjoyed yourself Sir Robert is very entertaining is he not?

MRS CHEVELEY Most entertaining! I have enjoyed my talk with him immensely

LADY MARKBY He has had a very interesting and brilliant career And he has married a most admirable wife Lady Chiltern is a woman of the very highest principles I am glad to say I am a little too old now myself to trouble about setting a good example but I always admire people who do And

Lady Chiltern has a very ennobling effect on life though her dinner parties are rather dull sometimes But one can't have everything can one? And now I must go dear Shall I call for you to-morrow?

60

MRS CHEVELEY Thanks

LADY MARKBY We might drive in the Park at five Everything looks so fresh in the Park now!

MRS CHEVELEY Except the people!

LADY MARKBY Perhaps the people are a little jaded I have often observed that the Season as it goes on produces a kind of softening of the brain However I think anything is better than high intellectual pressure That is the most unbecoming thing there is It makes the noses of the young gals so particularly large And there is nothing so difficult to many as a large nose men don't like them Good night dear! (*To LADY CHILTERN*) Good night Gertrude! (*Goes out on LORD CAVERSHAM'S arm*)

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MRS CHEVELEY What a charming house you have Lady Chiltern! I have spent a delightful evening It has been so interesting getting to know your husband

LADY CHILTERN Why did you wish to meet my husband, Mrs Cheveley?

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MRS CHEVELEY Oh I will tell you I wanted to interest him in this Argentine Canal scheme of which I dare say you have heard And I found him most susceptible—susceptible to reason, I mean A rare thing in a man I converted him in ten minutes He is going to make a speech in the House to-morrow night in favor of the idea We must go to the Ladies Gallery and hear him! It will be a great occasion!

LADY CHILTERN There must be some mistake That scheme could never have my husband's support

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MRS CHEVELEY Oh I assure you it's all settled I don't regret my tedious journey from Vienna now It has been a great success But of course for the next twenty-four hours the whole thing is a dead secret

LADY CHILTERN (*gently*) A secret? Between whom?

MRS CHEVELEY (*with a flash of amusement in her eyes*) Between your husband and myself

100

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*entering*) Your carriage is here Mrs Cheveley!

MRS CHEVELEY Thanks! Good evening, Lady Chiltern! Good night Lord Goring! I am at Claridge's Don't you think you might leave a card?

LORD GORING If you wish it Mrs Cheveley!

MRS CHEVELEY Oh don't be so solemn about it or I shall be obliged to leave a card on you In England I suppose that would be hardly considered *en regle* Abroad we are more civilized Will you see me down Sir Robert? Now that we have both the same interests at heart we shall be great friends I

110

hope (*Sails out on SIR ROBERT CHILTERN'S arm*  
 LADY CHILTERN goes to the top of the staircase and looks down at them as they descend Her expression is troubled After a little time she is joined by some of the guests and passes with them into another reception-room )

MABEL CHILTERN What a horrid woman!

LORD GORING You should go to bed Miss Mabel

MABEL CHILTERN Lord Goring!

10 LORD GORING My father told me to go to bed an hour ago I don't see why I shouldn't give you the same advice I always pass on good advice It is the only thing to do with it It is never of any use to oneself

MABEL CHILTERN Lord Goring, you are always ordering me out of the room I think it most courageous of you Especially as I am not going to bed for hours (*Goes over to sofa*) You can come and sit down if you like, and talk about anything in the world, except the Royal Academy, Mrs Cheveley or novels in Scotch dialect They are not improving subjects (*Catches sight of something that is lying on the sofa half hidden by the cushion*) What is this? Some one has dropped a diamond brooch! Quite beautiful isn't it? (*Shows it to him*) I wish it was mine, but Gertrude won't let me wear anything but pearls and I am thoroughly sick of pearls They make one look so plain, so good and so intellectual I wonder whom the brooch belongs to

30 LORD GORING I wonder who dropped it

MABEL CHILTERN It is a beautiful brooch

LORD GORING It is a handsome bracelet

MABEL CHILTERN It isn't a bracelet It's a brooch

LORD GORING It can be used as a bracelet (*Takes it from her and pulling out a green letter case puts the ornament carefully in it, and replaces the whole thing in his breastpocket with the most perfect sang froid*)

MABEL CHILTERN What are you doing?

40 LORD GORING Miss Mabel I am going to make a rather strange request of you

MABEL CHILTERN (*eagerly*) Oh pray do! I have been waiting for it all the evening

LORD GORING (*is a little taken aback, but recovers himself*) Don't mention to anybody that I have taken charge of this brooch Should any one write and claim it let me know at once

MABEL CHILTERN That is a strange request

LORD GORING Well you see I gave this brooch to 50 somebody once years ago

MABEL CHILTERN You did?

LORD GORING Yes

LADY CHILTERN enters alone The other guests have gone

MABEL CHILTERN Then I shall certainly bid you good night Good night, Gertrude! (*Exit*

LADY CHILTERN Good night dear! (*To LORD GORING*) You saw whom Lady Markby brought here to night

LORD GORING Yes It was an unpleasant surprise 60 What did she come here for?

LADY CHILTERN Apparently to try and lure Robert to uphold some fraudulent scheme in which she is interested The Argentine Canal, in fact

LORD GORING She has mistaken her man hasn't she?

LADY CHILTERN She is incapable of understanding an upright nature like my husband's!

LORD GORING Yes I should fancy she came to grief if she tried to get Robert into her toils It is extraordinary what astounding mistakes clever women make 70

LADY CHILTERN I don't call women of that kind clever I call them stupid!

LORD GORING Same thing often Good night, Lady Chiltern!

LADY CHILTERN Good-night!

Enter SIR ROBERT CHILTERN

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN My dear Arthur, you are not going? Do stop a little! 80

LORD GORING Afraid I can't thanks I have promised to look in at the Hairlocks I believe they have got a mauve Hungarian band that plays mauve Hungarian music See you soon Good by (*Exit*

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN How beautiful you look to night, Gertrude!

LADY CHILTERN Robert, it is not true is it? You are not going to lend your support to this Argentine speculation? You couldn't!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*starting*) Who told you 90 I intended to do so?

LADY CHILTERN That woman who has just gone out, Mrs Cheveley, as she calls herself now She seemed to taunt me with it Robert I know this woman You don't We were at school together She was untruthful dishonest an evil influence on every one whose trust or friendship she could win I hated I despised her She stole things she was a thief She was sent away for being a thief Why do you let her influence you? 100

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Gertrude what you tell me may be true but it happened many years ago It is best forgotten! Miss Cheveley may have changed since then No one should be entirely judged by his past

LADY CHILTERN (*sadly*) One's past is what one is It is the only way by which people should be judged

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN That is a hard saying Gertrude!

LADY CHILTERN It is a true saying Robert And what did she mean by boasting that she had got you 110

to lend your support your name to a thing I have heard you describe as the most dishonest and fraudulent scheme there has ever been in political life?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*biting his lip*) I was mistaken in the view I took We all may make mistakes

LADY CHILTERN But you told me yesterday that you had received the report from the Commission, and that it entirely condemned the whole thing

10 SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*walking up and down*) I have reasons now to believe that the Commission was prejudiced, or, at any rate misinformed Besides Gertrude public and private life are different things They have different laws, and move on different lines

LADY CHILTERN They should both represent man at his highest I see no difference between them

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*stopping*) In the present case on a matter of practical politics, I have changed my mind That is all

20 LADY CHILTERN All!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*sternly*) Yes!

LADY CHILTERN Robert! Oh! it is horrible that I should have to ask you such a question—Robert, are you telling me the whole truth?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Why do you ask me such a question?

LADY CHILTERN (*after a pause*) Why do you not answer it?

30 SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*sitting down*) Gertrude, truth is a very complex thing, and politics is a very complex business There are wheels within wheels One may be under certain obligations to people that one must pay Sooner or later in political life one has to compromise Every one does

LADY CHILTERN Compromise? Robert, why do you talk so differently to night from the way I have always heard you talk? Why are you changed?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I am not changed But circumstances alter things

40 LADY CHILTERN Circumstances should never alter principles!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN But if I told you—

LADY CHILTERN What?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN That it was necessary, vitally necessary

50 LADY CHILTERN It can never be necessary to do what is not honorable Or if it be necessary then what is it that I have loved! But it is not Robert, tell me it is not Why should it be? What gain would you get? Money? We have no need of that! And money that comes from a tainted source is a degradation Power? But power is nothing in itself It is power to do good that is fine—that, and that only What is it, then? Robert tell me why you are going to do this dishonorable thing!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Gertrude, you have no right

to use that word I told you it was a question of rational compromise It is no more than that

LADY CHILTERN Robert that is all very well for other men, for men who treat life simply as a sordid speculation but not for you Robert, not for you 60 You are different All your life you have stood apart from others You have never let the world soil you To the world as to myself you have been an ideal always Oh! be that ideal still That great inheritance throw not away—that tower of ivory do not destroy Robert men can love what is beneath them—things unworthy, stained, dishonored We women worship when we love, and when we lose our worship we lose everything Oh! don't kill my love for you don't 70 kill that!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Gertrude!

LADY CHILTERN I know that there are men with horrible secrets in their lives—men who have done some shameful thing and who in some critical moment have to pay for it by doing some other act of shame—oh! don't tell me you are such as they are! Robert is there in your life any secret dishonor or disgrace? Tell me tell me at once that—

80 SIR ROBERT CHILTERN That what?

LADY CHILTERN (*speaking very slowly*) That our lives may drift apart

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Drift apart?

LADY CHILTERN That they may be entirely separate It would be better for us both

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Gertrude there is nothing in my past life that you might not know

LADY CHILTERN I was sure of it, Robert I was sure of it But why did you say those dreadful things so unlike your real self? Don't let us ever talk 90 about the subject again You will write, won't you to Mrs Cheveley and tell her that you cannot support this scandalous scheme of hers? If you have given her any promise you must take it back, that is all!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Must I write and tell her that?

LADY CHILTERN Surely, Robert! What else is there to do?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I might see her personally 100 It would be better

LADY CHILTERN You must never see her again Robert She is not a woman you should ever speak to She is not worthy to talk to a man like you No you must write to her at once now, this moment, and let your letter show her that your decision is quite irrevocable!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Write this moment!

LADY CHILTERN Yes

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN But it is so late It is close 110 on twelve

LADY CHILTERN That makes no matter She must know at once that she has been mistaken in you—

and that you are not a man to do anything base or underhand or dishonorable Write here Robert—write that you decline to support this scheme of hers as you hold it to be a dishonest scheme Yes—write the word dishonest She knows what that word means (SIR ROBERT CHILTERN *sits down and writes a letter His wife takes it up and reads it*) Yes, that will do (Rings bell) And now the envelope (*He writes the envelope slowly Enter MASON*) Have this letter sent at once to Claridge's Hotel There is no answer (*Exit MASON* LADY CHILTERN *kneels down beside her husband and puts her arms round him*) Robert love gives one a sort of instinct to things I feel to-night that I have saved you from something that might have been a danger to you from something that might have made men honor you less than they do I don't think you realize sufficiently Robert that you have brought into the political life of our time a nobler atmosphere a finer attitude towards life, a freer air of purer aims and higher ideals—I know it, and for that I love you Robert

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Oh love me always Gertrude, love me always!

LADY CHILTERN I will love you always, because you will always be worthy of love We needs must love the highest when we see it! (*Kisses him and rises and goes out* SIR ROBERT CHILTERN *walks up and down for a moment then sits down and buries his face in his hands*)

*The servant enters and begins putting out the lights*

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Put out the lights Mason, put out the lights! (*The servant puts out the lights The room becomes almost dark The only light there is comes from the great chandelier that hangs over the staircase and illumines the tapestry of the Triumph of Love*)

CURTAIN

## ACT II

40 SCENE —*Morning room at SIR ROBERT CHILTERN'S house*

(LORD GORING, *dressed in the height of fashion is lounging in an armchair* SIR ROBERT CHILTERN *is standing in front of the fireplace He is evidently in a state of great mental excitement and distress As the scene progresses he paces nervously up and down the room*)

50 LORD GORING My dear Robert it's a very awkward business very awkward indeed You should have told your wife the whole thing Secrets from other

people's wives are a necessary luxury in modern life So at least, I am always told at the club by people who are bald enough to know better But no man should have a secret from his own wife She invariably finds it out Women have a wonderful instinct about things They can discover everything except the obvious

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Arthur I couldn't tell my wife When could I have told her? Not last night It would have made a life long separation between us and I would have lost the love of the one woman in the world I worship, of the only woman who has ever stirred love within me Last night it would have been quite impossible She would have turned from me in horror in horror and in contempt

LORD GORING Is Lady Chiltern as perfect as all that?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Yes my wife is as perfect as all that

LORD GORING (*taking off his left hand glove*) 70 What a pity! I beg your pardon, my dear fellow I didn't quite mean that But if what you tell me is true I should like to have a serious talk about life with Lady Chiltern

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN It would be quite useless

LORD GORING May I try?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Yes, but nothing could make her alter her views

LORD GORING Well at the worst it would simply be a psychological experiment 80

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN All such experiments are terribly dangerous

LORD GORING Everything is dangerous, my dear fellow If it wasn't so, life wouldn't be worth living

Well I am bound to say that I think you should have told her years ago

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN When? When we were engaged? Do you think she would have married me if she had known that the origin of my fortune is such as it is the basis of my career such as it is and that I had done a thing that I suppose most men would call shameful and dishonorable? 90

LORD GORING (*slowly*) Yes, most men would call it ugly names There is no doubt of that

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*bitterly*) Men who every day do something of the same kind themselves Men who, each one of them, have worse secrets in their own lives

LORD GORING That is the reason they are so pleased to find out other people's secrets It distracts public attention from their own 100

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN And, after all, whom did I wrong by what I did? No one

LORD GORING (*looking at him steadily*) Except yourself Robert

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*after a pause*) Of course I had private information about a certain transaction

contemplated by the Government of the day and I acted on it. Private information is practically the source of every large modern fortune.

LORD GORING (*tapping his boot with his cane*) And public scandal invariably the result.

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*pacing up and down the room*) Arthur, do you think that what I did nearly eighteen years ago should be brought up against me now? Do you think it fair that a man's whole career should be ruined for a fault done in one's boyhood almost? I was twenty-two at the time, and I had the double misfortune of being well born and poor—two unforgivable things nowadays. Is it fair that the folly the sin of one's youth if men choose to call it a sin, should wreck a life like mine should place me in the pillory should shatter all that I have worked for, all that I have built up? Is it fair, Arthur?

LORD GORING Life is never fair, Robert. And perhaps it is a good thing for most of us that it is not.

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Every man of ambition has to fight his century with its own weapons. What this century worships is wealth. The God of this century is wealth. To succeed one must have wealth. At all costs one must have wealth.

LORD GORING You underrate yourself, Robert. Believe me, without wealth you could have succeeded just as well.

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN When I was old perhaps. When I had lost my passion for power or could not use it. When I was tired, worn out, disappointed. I wanted my success when I was young. Youth is the time for success. I couldn't wait.

LORD GORING Well, you certainly have had your success while you are still young. No one in our day has had such a brilliant success. Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs at the age of forty—that's good enough for any one, I should think.

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN And if it is all taken away from me now? If I lose everything over a horrible scandal? If I am hounded from public life?

LORD GORING Robert, how could you have sold yourself for money?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*excitedly*) I did not sell myself for money. I bought success at a great price. That is all.

LORD GORING (*gravely*) Yes, you certainly paid a great price for it. But what first made you think of doing such a thing?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Baron Arnheim.

LORD GORING Damned scoundrel!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN No, he was a man of a most subtle and refined intellect. A man of culture, charm and distinction. One of the most intellectual men I ever met.

LORD GORING Ah! I prefer a gentlemanly fool my day. There is more to be said for stupidity than

people imagine. Personally, I have a great admiration for stupidity. It is a sort of fellow-feeling. I suppose. But how did he do it? Tell me the whole thing.

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*throws himself into an arm chair by the writing-table*) One night after dinner at Lord Radley's the Baron began talking about success in modern life as something that one could reduce to an absolutely definite science. With that wonderfully fascinating quiet voice of his he expounded to us the most terrible of all philosophies—the philosophy of power, preached to us the most marvelous of all gospels—the gospel of gold. I think he saw the effect he had produced on me for some days afterwards he wrote and asked me to come and see him. He was living then in Park Lane, in the house Lord Woolcomb has now. I remember so well how, with a strange smile on his pale, curved lips, he led me through his wonderful picture gallery, showed me his tapestries, his enamels, his jewels, his carved ivories, made me wonder at the strangeness of the luxury in which he lived, and then told me that luxury was nothing but a background, a painted scene in a play, and that power—power over other men, power over the world—was the one thing worth having, the one supreme pleasure worth knowing, the one joy one never tired of, and that in our century only the rich possessed it.

LORD GORING (*with great deliberation*) A thoroughly shallow creed.

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*rising*) I didn't think so then. I don't think so now. Wealth has given me enormous power. It gave me at the very outset of my life freedom, and freedom is everything. You have never been poor and never known what ambition is. You cannot understand what a wonderful chance the Baron gave me. Such a chance as few men get.

LORD GORING Fortunately for them, if one is to judge by results. But tell me definitely, how did the Baron finally persuade you to—well, to do what you did?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN When I was going away he said to me that if I ever could give him any private information of real value he would make me a very rich man. I was dazed at the prospect he held out to me, and my ambition and my desire for power were at that time boundless. Six weeks later certain private documents passed through my hands.

LORD GORING (*keeping his eyes steadily fixed on the carpet*) State documents?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Yes. (*LORD GORING sighs then passes his hand across his forehead and looks up*)

LORD GORING I had no idea that you, of all men in the world, could have been so weak, Robert, as to yield to such a temptation as Baron Arnheim held out to you.

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Weak? Oh, I am sick of

hearing that phrase Sick of using it about others Weak? Do you really think Arthur that it is weakness that yields to temptation? I tell you that there are terrible temptations that it requires strength and courage to yield to To stake all one's life on a single moment to risk everything on one throw, whether the stake be power or pleasure, I care not—there is no weakness in that There is a horrible terrible courage I had that courage I sat down the same afternoon and wrote Baron Arnheim the letter this woman now holds He made three-quarters of a million over the transaction

LORD GORING And you?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I received from the Baron £110 000

LORD GORING You were worth more, Robert

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN No, that money gave me exactly what I wanted power over others I went into the House immediately The Baron advised me in finance from time to time Before five years I had almost trebled my fortune Since then everything that I have touched has turned out a success In all things connected with money I have had a luck so extraordinary that sometimes it has made me almost afraid I remember having read somewhere in some strange book, that when the gods wish to punish us they answer our prayers

LORD GORING But tell me, Robert, did you never suffer any regret for what you had done?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN No I felt that I had fought the century with its own weapons and won

LORD GORING (*sadly*) You thought you had won?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I thought so (*After a long pause*) Arthur do you despise me for what I have told you?

LORD GORING (*with deep feeling in his voice*) I am very sorry for you, Robert, very sorry indeed

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I don't say that I suffered any remorse I didn't Not remorse in the ordinary, rather silly sense of the word But I have paid conscience money many times I had a wild hope that I might disarm destiny The sum Baron Arnheim gave me I have distributed twice over in public charities since then

LORD GORING (*looking up*) In public charities? Dear me! what a lot of harm you must have done, Robert!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Oh don't say that, Arthur don't talk like that

LORD GORING Never mind what I say Robert I am always saying what I shouldn't say In fact I usually say what I really think A great mistake nowadays It makes one so liable to be misunderstood As regards this dreadful business, I will help you in whatever way I can Of course you know that

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Thank you, Arthur, thank you But what is to be done? What can be done?

LORD GORING (*leaning back with his hands in his pockets*) Well the English can't stand a man who is always saying he is in the right but they are very fond of a man who admits that he has been in the wrong It is one of the best things in them However in your case, Robert a confession would not do The money, if you will allow me to say so is awkward Besides, if you did make a clean breast of the whole affair you would never be able to talk morality again And in England a man who can't talk morality twice a week to a large, popular, immoral audience is quite over as a serious politician There would be nothing left for him as a profession except Botany or the Church A confession would be of no use It would ruin you

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN It would ruin me Arthur the only thing for me to do now is to fight the thing out

LORD GORING (*rising from his chair*) I was waiting for you to say that, Robert It is the only thing to do now And you must begin by telling your wife the whole story

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN That I will not do

LORD GORING Robert believe me you are wrong

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I couldn't do it It would kill her love for me And now about this woman this Mrs Cheveley How can I defend myself against her? You knew her before Arthur, apparently

LORD GORING Yes

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Did you know her well?

LORD GORING (*arranging his necktie*) So little that I got engaged to be married to her once, when I was staying at the Tenbys The affair lasted for three days nearly

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Why was it broken off?

LORD GORING (*amly*) Oh I forget At least it makes no matter By the way have you tried her with money? She used to be confoundedly fond of money

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I offered her any sum she wanted She refused

LORD GORING Then the marvellous gospel of gold breaks down sometimes The rich can't do every thing after all

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Not everything I suppose you are right Arthur, I feel that public disgrace is in store for me I feel certain of it I never knew what terror was before I know it now It is as if a hand of ice were laid upon one's heart It is as if one's heart were beating itself to death in some empty hollow

LORD GORING (*striking the table*) Robert you must fight her You must fight her

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN But how?

LORD GORING I can't tell you how, at present I

have not the smallest idea But every one has some weak point There is some flaw in each one of us (*Strolls over to the fireplace and looks at himself in the glass*) My father tells me that even I have faults Perhaps I have I don't know

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN In defending myself against Mrs Cheveley I have a right to use any weapon I can find have I not?

LORD GORING (*still looking in the glass*) In your place I don't think I should have the smallest scruple in doing so She is thoroughly well able to take care of herself

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*sits down at the table and takes a pen in his hand*) Well I shall send a cipher telegram to the Embassy at Vienna to inquire if there is anything known against her There may be some secret scandal she might be afraid of

LORD GORING (*settling his buttonhole*) Oh, I should fancy Mrs Cheveley is one of those very modern women of our time who find a new scandal as becoming as a new bonnet and all them both in the Park every afternoon at five thirty I am sure she adores scandals and that the sorrow of her life at present is that she can't manage to have enough of them

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*writing*) Why do you say that?

LORD GORING (*turning round*) Well, she wore far too much rouge last night and not quite enough clothes That is always a sign of despair in a woman

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*striking a bell*) But it is worth while my wiring to Vienna, is it not?

LORD GORING It is always worth while asking a question though it is not always worth while answering one

*Enter MASON*

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Is Mr Trafford in his room?

MASON Yes, Sir Robert

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*puts what he has written into an envelope which he then carefully closes*) Tell him to have this sent off in cipher at once There must not be a moment's delay

MASON Yes, Sir Robert

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Oh! just give that back to me again (*Writes something on the envelope* MASON then goes out with the letter)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN She must have had some curious hold over Baron Arnheim I wonder what it was

LORD GORING (*smiling*) I wonder

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I will fight her to the death as long as my wife knows nothing

LORD GORING (*strongly*) Oh fight in any case—in any case

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*with a gesture of despair*)

If my wife found out there would be little left to fight for Well as soon as I hear from Vienna I shall let you know the result It is a chance just a chance, but I believe in it And as I fought the age with its own weapons, I will fight her with her weapons It is only fair and she looks like a woman with a past doesn't she?

LORD GORING Most pretty women do But there is a fashion in pasts just as there is a fashion in frocks Perhaps Mrs Cheveley's past is merely a slightly *decollete* one and they are excessively popular nowadays Besides my dear Robert I should not build too high hopes on frightening Mrs Cheveley I should not fancy Mrs Cheveley is a woman who would be easily frightened She has survived all her creditors and she shows wonderful presence of mind

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Oh! I live on hopes now I clutch at every chance I feel like a man on a ship that is sinking The water is round my feet and the very air is bitter with storm Hush! I hear my wife's voice

*Enter LADY CHILTERN in walking dress*

LADY CHILTERN Good afternoon, Lord Goring!

LORD GORING Good afternoon Lady Chiltern! Have you been in the Park?

LADY CHILTERN No I have just come from the Woman's Liberal Association where by the way Robert your name was received with loud applause and now I have come in to have my tea (*To LORD GORING*) You will wait and have some tea won't you?

LORD GORING I'll wait for a short time thanks

LADY CHILTERN I will be back in a moment I am only going to take my hat off

LORD GORING (*in his most earnest manner*) Oh! please don't It is so pretty One of the prettiest hats I ever saw I hope the Woman's Liberal Association received it with loud applause

LADY CHILTERN (*with a smile*) We have much more important work to do than to look at each other's bonnets Lord Goring

LORD GORING Really? What sort of work?

LADY CHILTERN Oh! dull useful delightful things Factory Acts Female Inspectors, the Eight Hours Bill the Parliamentary Franchise Everything in fact that you would find thoroughly uninteresting

LORD GORING And never bonnets?

LADY CHILTERN (*with mock indignation*) Never bonnets never! (*LADY CHILTERN goes out through the door leading to her boudoir*)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*takes LORD GORING'S hand*) You have been a good friend to me Arthur a thoroughly good friend

LORD GORING I don't know that I have been able to do much for you, Robert as yet In fact I have



not been able to do anything for you as far as I can see I am thoroughly disappointed with myself

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN You have enabled me to tell you the truth That is something The truth has always stifled me

LORD GORING Ah! the truth is a thing I get rid of as soon as possible! Bad habit, by the way Makes one very unpopular at the club with the older members They call it being conceited Perhaps it is

10 SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I would to God that I had been able to tell the truth to live the truth Ah! that is the great thing in life to live the truth (*Sighs and goes toward the door*) I'll see you soon again Arthur, shan't I?

LORD GORING Certainly Whenever you like I'm going to look in at the Bachelors Ball to night unless I find something better to do But I'll come around to morrow morning If you should want me to night by any chance send a note to Curzon Street

20 SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Thank you (*As he reaches the door, LADY CHILTERN enters from her boudoir*)

LADY CHILTERN You are not going Robert?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I have some letters to write, dear

LADY CHILTERN (*going to him*) You work too hard Robert You seem never to think of yourself, and you are looking so tired

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN It is nothing, dear nothing (*He kisses her and goes out*)

30 LADY CHILTERN (*to LORD GORING*) Do sit down I am so glad you have called I want to talk to you about well not about bonnets or the Woman's Liberal Association You take far too much interest in the first subject and not nearly enough in the second

LORD GORING You want to talk to me about Mrs Cheveley?

LADY CHILTERN Yes You have guessed it After you left last night I found out that what she had said was really true Of course I made Robert write her a letter at once withdrawing his promise

LORD GORING So he gave me to understand

LADY CHILTERN To have kept it would have been the first stain on a career that has been stainless always Robert must be above reproach He is not like other men He cannot afford to do what other men do (*She looks at LORD GORING who remains silent*) Don't you agree with me? You are Robert's greatest friend You are our greatest friend Lord Goring No one except myself knows Robert better than you do He has no secrets from me and I don't think he has any from you

LORD GORING He certainly has no secrets from me At least I don't think so

LADY CHILTERN Then am I not right in my estimate of him? I know I am right But speak to me frankly

LORD GORING (*looking straight at her*) Quite frankly?

LADY CHILTERN Surely You have nothing to conceal have you? 60

LORD GORING Nothing But my dear Lady Chiltern I think if you will allow me to say so, that in practical life—

LADY CHILTERN (*smiling*) Of which you know so little Lord Goring—

LORD GORING Of which I know nothing by experience though I know something by observation I think that in practical life there is something about success, actual success that is a little unscrupulous, something about ambition that is unscrupulous always Once a man has set his heart and soul on getting to a certain point if he has to climb the crag, he climbs the crag if he has to walk in the mire— 70

LADY CHILTERN Well?

LORD GORING He walks in the mire Of course I am only talking generally about life

LADY CHILTERN (*gravely*) I hope so Why do you look at me so strangely Lord Goring?

LORD GORING Lady Chiltern, I have sometimes thought that perhaps you are a little hard in some of your views on life I think that often you don't make sufficient allowances In every nature there are elements of weakness or worse than weakness Supposing for instance that—that any public man my father or Lord Merton or Robert sixty years ago, written some foolish letter to some one 80

LADY CHILTERN What do you mean by a foolish letter? 90

LORD GORING A letter gravely compromising one's position I am only putting an imaginary case

LADY CHILTERN Robert is as incapable of doing a foolish thing as he is of doing a wrong thing

LORD GORING (*after a pause*) Nobody is incapable of doing a foolish thing Nobody is incapable of doing a wrong thing

LADY CHILTERN Are you a Pessimist? What will the other dandies say? They will all have to go into mourning 100

LORD GORING (*rising*) No Lady Chiltern, I am not a Pessimist Indeed I am not sure that I quite know what Pessimism really means All I do know is that life cannot be understood without much charity cannot be lived without much charity It is love, and not German philosophy that is the true explanation of this world whatever may be the explanation of the next And if you are ever in trouble Lady Chiltern, trust me absolutely and I will help you in every way I can If you ever want me come to me for my assistance and you shall have it Come at once to me 110

LADY CHILTERN (*looking at him in surprise*) Lord

Goring you are talking quite seriously I don't think I ever heard you talk seriously before

LORD GORING (*laughing*) You must excuse me Lady Chiltern It won't occur again if I can help it

LADY CHILTERN But I like you to be serious

*Enter MABEL CHILTERN in the most ravishing frock*

MABEL CHILTERN Dear Gertrude, don't say such a dreadful thing to Lord Goring Seriousness would be very unbecoming to him Good afternoon Lord Goring! Pray be as trivial as you can

LORD GORING I should like to Miss Mabel but I am afraid I am a little out of practice this morning and besides I have to be going now

MABEL CHILTERN Just when I have come in! What dreadful manners you have! I am sure you were very badly brought up

LORD GORING I was

MABEL CHILTERN I wish I had brought you up!

LORD GORING I am so sorry you didn't

MABEL CHILTERN It is too late now I suppose?

LORD GORING (*smiling*) I am not sure

MABEL CHILTERN Will you ride to-morrow morning?

LORD GORING Yes, at ten

MABEL CHILTERN Don't forget

LORD GORING Of course I shan't By the way, Lady Chiltern there is no list of your guests in The Morning Post of to-day It has apparently been crowded out by the County Council or the Lambeth Conference or something equally boring Could you let me have a list? I have a particular reason for asking you

LADY CHILTERN I am sure Mr Trafford will be able to give you one

LORD GORING Thanks so much

MABEL CHILTERN Tommy is the most useful person in London

LORD GORING (*turning to her*) And who is the most ornamental?

MABEL CHILTERN (*triumphantly*) I am

LORD GORING How clever of you to guess it! (*Takes up his hat and cane*) Good by Lady Chiltern! You will remember what I said to you, won't you?

LADY CHILTERN Yes, but I don't know why you said it to me

LORD GORING I hardly know myself Good by Miss Mabel!

MABEL CHILTERN (*with a little moue of disappointment*) I wish you were not going I have had four wonderful adventures this morning four and a half in fact You might stop and listen to some of them

LORD GORING How very selfish of you to have four and a half! There won't be any left for me

MABEL CHILTERN I don't want you to have any They would not be good for you

LORD GORING That is the first unkind thing you have ever said to me How charmingly you said it! Ten to-morrow

MABEL CHILTERN Sharp

LORD GORING Quite sharp But don't bring Mr Trafford

MABEL CHILTERN (*with a little toss of the head*) Of course I shan't bring Tommy Trafford Tommy Trafford is in great disgrace

LORD GORING I am delighted to hear it (*Bows and goes out*)

MABEL CHILTERN Gertrude, I wish you would speak to Tommy Trafford

LADY CHILTERN What has poor Mr Trafford done this time? Robert says he is the best secretary he has ever had

MABEL CHILTERN Well, Tommy has proposed to me again Tommy really does nothing but propose to me He proposed to me last night in the music room when I was quite unprotected as there was an elaborate trio going on I didn't dare to make the smallest repartee, I need hardly tell you If I had it would have stopped the music at once Musical people are so absurdly unreasonable They always want one to be perfectly dumb at the very moment when one is longing to be absolutely deaf Then he proposed to me in broad daylight this morning in front of that dreadful statue of Achilles Really the things that go on in front of that work of art are quite appalling The police should interfere At luncheon I saw by the glare in his eye that he was going to propose again and I just managed to check him in time by assuring him that I was a bimetalist Fortunately I don't know what bimetalism means And I don't believe anybody else does either But the observation crushed Tommy for ten minutes He looked quite shocked And then Tommy is so annoying in the way he proposes If he proposed at the top of his voice I should not mind so much That might produce some effect on the public But he does it in a horrid confidential way When Tommy wants to be romantic he talks to one just like a doctor I am very fond of Tommy but his methods of proposing are quite out of date I wish Gertrude you would speak to him and tell him that once a week is quite often enough to propose to any one and that it should always be done in a manner that attracts some attention

LADY CHILTERN Dear Mabel, don't talk like that Besides, Robert thinks very highly of Mr Trafford He believes he has a brilliant future before him

MABEL CHILTERN Oh! I wouldn't marry a man with a future before him for anything under the sun

LADY CHILTERN Mabel!

MABEL CHILTERN Oh! I wouldn't marry a man with a future before him for anything under the sun

LADY CHILTERN Mabel!

MABEL CHILTERN I know dear You married a man with a future, didn't you? But then Robert was a genius and you have a noble self sacrificing character You can stand geniuses I have no character at all and Robert is the only genius I could ever bear As a rule I think they are quite impossible Geniuses talk so much don't they? Such a bad habit! And they are always thinking about themselves, when I want them to be thinking about me

10 I must go round now and rehearse at Lady Basil-don's You remember we are having tableaux don't you? The Triumph of something I don't know what! I hope it will be triumph of me Only triumph I am really interested in at present (*Kisses LADY CHILTERN and goes out then comes running back*) Oh Gertrude do you know who is coming to see you? That dreadful Mrs Cheveley in a most lovely gown Did you ask her?

LADY CHILTERN (*rising*) Mrs Cheveley! Coming to see me? Impossible!

MABEL CHILTERN I assure you she is coming upstairs as large as life and not nearly so natural

LADY CHILTERN You need not wait Mabel Remember Lady Basil-don is expecting you

MABEL CHILTERN Oh! I must shake hands with Lady Markby She is delightful I love being scolded by her

*Enter MASON*

MASON Lady Markby Mrs Cheveley

30 *Enter LADY MARKBY and MRS CHEVELEY*

LADY CHILTERN (*advancing to meet them*) Dear Lady Markby, how nice of you to come and see me! (*Shakes hands with her, and bows somewhat distantly to MRS CHEVELEY*) Won't you sit down, Mrs Cheveley?

MRS CHEVELEY Thanks Isn't that Miss Chiltern? I should like so much to know her

LADY CHILTERN Mabel Mrs Cheveley wishes to know you (*MABEL CHILTERN gives a little nod*)

40 MRS CHEVELEY (*sitting down*) I thought your frock so charming last night, Miss Chiltern So simple and suitable

MABEL CHILTERN Really? I must tell my dress-maker It will be such a surprise to her Good by Lady Markby!

LADY MARKBY Going already?

MABEL CHILTERN I am so sorry but I am obliged to I am just off to rehearsal I have got to stand on my head in some tableaux

50 LADY MARKBY On your head child? Oh! I hope not! I believe it is most unhealthy (*Takes a seat on the sofa next LADY CHILTERN*)

MABEL CHILTERN But it is for an excellent char

ity in aid of the Undeserving, the only people I am really interested in I am the secretary and Tommy Trafford is treasurer

MRS CHEVELEY And what is Lord Goring?

MABEL CHILTERN Oh! Lord Goring is president

MRS CHEVELEY The post should suit him admirably, unless he has deteriorated since I knew him first 60

LADY MARKBY (*reflecting*) You are remarkably modern Mabel A little too modern, perhaps Nothing is so dangerous as being too modern One is apt to grow old fashioned quite suddenly I have known many instances of it

MABEL CHILTERN What a dreadful prospect!

LADY MARKBY Ah! my dear you need not be nervous You will always be as pretty as possible That is the best fashion there is and the only fashion that England succeeds in setting 70

MABEL CHILTERN (*with a curtsy*) Thank you so much, Lady Markby, for England and myself (*Goes out*)

LADY MARKBY (*turning to LADY CHILTERN*) Dear Gertrude, we just called to know if Mrs Cheveley's diamond brooch has been found

LADY CHILTERN Here?

MRS CHEVELEY Yes I missed it when I got back to Clardges, and I thought I might possibly have dropped it here 80

LADY CHILTERN I have heard nothing about it But I will send for the butler and ask (*Touches the bell*)

MRS CHEVELEY Oh pray don't trouble, Lady Chiltern I dare say I lost it at the Opera, before we came on here

LADY MARKBY Ah yes, I suppose it must have been at the Opera The fact is we all scramble and jostle so much nowadays that I wonder we have anything at all left on us at the end of an evening I know myself that when I am coming back from the Drawing Room, I always feel as if I hadn't a shred on me, except a small shred of decent reputation, just enough to prevent the lower classes making painful observations through the windows of the carriage The fact is that our Society is terribly overpopulated Really some one should arrange a proper scheme of assisted emigration It would do a great deal of good 100

MRS CHEVELEY I quite agree with you, Lady Markby It is nearly six years since I have been in London for the season, and I must say Society has become dreadfully mixed One sees the oddest people everywhere

LADY MARKBY That is quite true, dear But one needn't know them I'm sure I don't know half the people who come to my house Indeed from all I hear, I shouldn't like to

Enter MASON

LADY CHILTERN What sort of a brooch was it that you lost Miss Cheveley?

MRS CHEVELEY A diamond snake-brooch with a ruby a rather large ruby

LADY MARKBY I thought you said there was a sapphire on the head dear?

MRS CHEVELEY (*smiling*) No Lady Markby—a ruby

10 LADY MARKBY (*nodding her head*) And very be coming I am quite sure

LADY CHILTERN Has a ruby and diamond brooch been found in any of the rooms this morning Mason?

MASON No, my lady

MRS CHEVELEY It really is of no consequence Lady Chiltern I am so sorry to have put you to any inconvenience

20 LADY CHILTERN (*coldly*) Oh, it has been no in convenience That will do Mason You can bring tea

LADY MARKBY Well I must say it is most annoying to lose anything I remember once at Bath years ago, losing in the Pump Room an exceedingly hand- some cameo bracelet that Sir John had given me I don't think he has ever given me anything since I am sorry to say He has sadly degenerated Really this horrid House of Commons quite ruins our hus bands for us I think the Lower House by far the 30 greatest blow to a happy married life that there has been since that terrible thing called the Higher Edu cation of Women was invented

LADY CHILTERN Ah! it is heresy to say that in this house, Lady Markby Robert is a great champion of the Higher Education of Women and so, I am afraid, am I

MRS CHEVELEY The higher education of men is what I should like to see Men need it so sadly

40 LADY MARKBY They do dear But I am afraid such a scheme would be quite impractical I don't think man has much capacity for development He has got as far as he can and that is not far is it? With regard to women well, dear Gertrude you belong to the younger generation and I am sure it is all right if you approve of it In my time of course we were taught not to understand anything That was the old system, and wonderfully interesting it was I assure you that the amount of things I and my poor dear sister were taught not to understand 50 was quite extraordinary But modern women under stand everything I am told

MRS CHEVELEY Except their husbands That is the one thing the modern woman never understands

LADY MARKBY And a very good thing too, dear I dare say It might break up many a happy home if they did Not yours I need hardly say, Gertrude

You have married a pattern husband I wish I could say as much for myself But since Sir John has taken to attending the debates regularly which he never used to do in the good old days his lan- 60 guage has become quite impossible He always seems to think that he is addressing the House, and conse quently whenever he discusses the state of the agri cultural laborer or the Welsh Church or something quite improper of that kind I am obliged to send all the servants out of the room It is not pleasant to see one's own butler who has been with one for twenty three years actually blushing at the side board and the footmen making contortions in cor- 70 ners like persons in circuses I assure you my life will be quite ruined unless they send John at once to the Upper House He won't take any interest in politics then will he? The House of Lords is so sensible An assembly of gentlemen But in his pres ent state Sir John is really a great trial Why this morning before breakfast was half over, he stood up on the hearth rug put his hands in his pockets and appealed to the country at the top of his voice I left the table as soon as I had my second cup of tea, I need hardly say But his violent language 80 could be heard all over the house! I trust Gertrude that Sir Robert is not like that?

LADY CHILTERN But I am very much interested in politics Lady Markby I love to hear Robert talk about them

LADY MARKBY Well I hope he is not as devoted to Blue Books as Sir John is I don't think they can be quite improving reading for any one

MRS CHEVELEY (*languidly*) I have never read a Blue Book I prefer books in yellow covers 90

LADY MARKBY (*gemally unconscious*) Yellow is a gayer color is it not? I used to wear yellow a good deal in my early days and would do so now if Sir John was not so painfully personal in his observa tions and a man on the question of dress is always ridiculous is he not?

MRS CHEVELEY Oh no! I think men are the only authorities on dress

LADY MARKBY Really? One wouldn't say so from the sort of hats they wear would one? (*The butler enters followed by the footman Tea is set on a small table close to* LADY CHILTERN ) 100

LADY CHILTERN May I give you some tea Miss Cheveley?

MRS CHEVELEY Thanks (*The butler hands Mrs CHEVELEY a cup of tea on a salver*)

LADY CHILTERN Some tea Lady Markby?

LADY MARKBY No thanks dear (*The servants go out*) The fact is, I have promised to go round for ten minutes to see poor Lady Brancaster who is in 110 very great trouble Her daughter quite a well brought up girl too, has actually become engaged to

be married to a curate in Shropshire. It is very sad very sad indeed. I can't understand this modern mania for curates. In my time we gals saw them of course running about the place like rabbits. But we never took any notice of them. I need hardly say. But I am told that nowadays country society is quite horeycombed with them. I think it most irreligious. And then the eldest son has quarreled with his father and it is said that when they meet at the club

10 Lord Brancaster always hides himself behind the money article in *The Times*. However I believe that is quite a common occurrence nowadays and that they have to take in extra copies of *The Times* at all the clubs in St James's Street. There are so many sons who won't have anything to do with their fathers, and so many fathers who won't speak to their sons. I think myself, it is very much to be regretted.

MRS CHEVELEY So do I. Fathers have so much to learn from their sons nowadays.

20

LADY MARKBY Really dear? What?

MRS CHEVELEY The art of living. The only really Fine Art we have produced in modern times.

LADY MARKBY (*shaking her head*) Ah! I am afraid Lord Brancaster knew a good deal about that. More than his poor wife ever did. (*Turning to LADY CHILTERN*) You know Lady Brancaster don't you, dear?

LADY CHILTERN Just slightly. She was staying at Langton last autumn when we were there.

30

LADY MARKBY Well, like all stout women she looks the very picture of happiness as no doubt you noticed. But there are many tragedies in her family besides this affair of the curate. Her own sister Mrs Jekyll has a most unhappy life through no fault of her own. I am sorry to say. She ultimately was so broken hearted that she went into a convent, or on to the operatic stage. I forget which. No. I think it was decorative art needlework she took up. I know

40

she had lost all sense of pleasure in life. (*Rising*) And Gertrude if you will allow me I shall leave Mrs Cheveley in your charge and call back for her in a quarter of an hour. Or perhaps dear Mrs Cheveley you wouldn't mind waiting in the carriage while I am with Lady Brancaster. As I intend it to be a visit of condolence I shan't stay long.

MRS CHEVELEY (*rising*) I don't mind waiting in the carriage at all, provided there is somebody to look at me.

LADY MARKBY Well, I hear the curate is always prowling about the house.

50

MRS CHEVELEY I am afraid I am not fond of girl friends.

LADY CHILTERN (*rising*) Oh I hope Mrs Cheveley will stay here a little. I should like to have a few minutes conversation with her.

MRS CHEVELEY How very kind of you, Lady

Chiltern! Believe me nothing would give me greater pleasure.

LADY MARKBY Ah! no doubt you both have many pleasant reminiscences of your schooldays to talk over together. Good by dear Gertrude! Shall I see you at Lady Bonars to night? She has discovered a wonderful new genius. He does nothing at all I believe. That is a great comfort is it not?

60

LADY CHILTERN Robert and I are dining at home by ourselves to night, and I don't think I shall go anywhere afterwards. Robert of course, will have to be in the House. But there is nothing interesting on.

LADY MARKBY Dining at home by yourselves? Is that quite prudent? Ah I forgot your husband is an exception. Mine is the general rule and nothing ages a woman so rapidly as having married the general rule.

70

(*Exit LADY MARKBY*)

MRS CHEVELEY Wonderful woman Lady Markby, isn't she? Talks more and says less than anybody I ever met. She is made to be a public speaker. Much more so than her husband though he is a typical Englishman always dull and usually violent.

LADY CHILTERN (*makes no answer but remains standing. There is a pause. Then the eyes of the two women meet. LADY CHILTERN looks stern and pale. MRS CHEVELEY seems rather amused*) Mrs Cheveley I think it is right to tell you quite frankly that had I known who you really were I should not have invited you to my house last night.

80

MRS CHEVELEY (*with an impertinent smile*) Really?

LADY CHILTERN I could not have done so.

MRS CHEVELEY I see that after all these years you have not changed a bit, Gertrude.

90

LADY CHILTERN I never change.

MRS CHEVELEY (*elevating her eyebrows*) Then life has taught you nothing?

LADY CHILTERN It has taught me that a person who has once been guilty of a dishonest and dishonorable action may be guilty of it a second time and should be shunned.

MRS CHEVELEY Would you apply that rule to every one?

100

LADY CHILTERN Yes to every one without exception.

MRS CHEVELEY Then I am sorry for you Gertrude very sorry for you.

LADY CHILTERN You see now I am sure, that for many reasons any further acquaintance between us during your stay in London is quite impossible.

MRS CHEVELEY (*leaning back in her chair*) Do you know Gertrude I don't mind you talking morality a bit. Morality is simply the attitude we adopt towards people whom we personally dislike. You dislike me. I am quite aware of that. And I have always detested you. And yet I have come here to do you a service.

110

LADY CHILTERN (*contemptuously*) Like the service you wished to render my husband last night I suppose Thank heaven I saved him from that

MRS CHEVELEY (*starting to her feet*) It was you who made him write that insolent letter to me? It was you who made him break his promise?

LADY CHILTERN Yes

MRS CHEVELEY Then you must make him keep it I give you till to-morrow morning—no more If by that time your husband does not solemnly bind himself to help me in this great scheme in which I am interested—

LADY CHILTERN This fraudulent speculation—

MRS CHEVELEY Call it what you choose I hold your husband in the hollow of my hand and if you are wise you will make him do what I tell him

LADY CHILTERN (*rising and going towards her*) You are impertinent What has my husband to do with you? With a woman like you?

MRS CHEVELEY (*with a bitter laugh*) In this world like meets with like It is because your husband is himself fraudulent and dishonest that we pair so well together Between you and him there are chasms He and I are closer than friends We are enemies linked together The same sin binds us

LADY CHILTERN How dare you class my husband with yourself How dare you threaten him or me? Leave my house You are unfit to enter it

(SIR ROBERT CHILTERN *enters from behind He hears his wife's last words and sees to whom they are addressed He grows deadly pale*)

MRS CHEVELEY Your house! A house bought with the price of dishonor! A house everything in which has been paid for by fraud (*Turns round and sees SIR ROBERT CHILTERN*) Ask him what the origin of his fortune is! Get him to tell you how he sold to a stockbroker a Cabinet secret Learn from him to what you owe your position

LADY CHILTERN It is not true! Robert! It is not true!

MRS CHEVELEY (*pointing at him with outstretched finger*) Look at him! Can he deny it? Does he dare to?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Go! Go at once You have done your worst now

MRS CHEVELEY My worst? I have not yet finished with you with either of you I give you both till to-morrow at noon If by then you don't do what I bid you to do, the whole world shall know the origin of Robert Chiltern (SIR ROBERT CHILTERN *strikes the bell Enter MASON*)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Show Mrs Cheveley out (MRS CHEVELEY *starts, then bows with somewhat exaggerated politeness to LADY CHILTERN who makes no sign of response As she passes by SIR ROBERT CHILTERN who is standing close to the door she pauses for a moment and looks him straight*

*in the face She then goes out followed by the servant, who closes the door after him The husband and wife are left alone LADY CHILTERN stands like some one in a dreadful dream Then she turns round and looks at her husband She looks at him with strange eyes as though she was seeing him for the first time*)

LADY CHILTERN You sold a Cabinet secret for money! You began your life with fraud! You built up your career on dishonor! Oh tell me it is not true! Lie to me! Lie to me! Tell me it is not true!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN What this woman said is quite true But Gertrude listen to me You don't realize how I was tempted Let me tell you the whole thing (*Goes towards her*)

LADY CHILTERN Don't come near me Don't touch me I feel as if you had soiled me forever Oh! what a mask you have been wearing all these years! A horrible painted mask! You sold yourself for money Oh! a common thief were better You put yourself up to sale to the highest bidder! You were bought in the market You lied to the whole world And yet you will not lie to me

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*rushing towards her*) Gertrude! Gertrude!

LADY CHILTERN (*thrusting him back with outstretched hands*) No don't speak! Say nothing! Your voice wakes terrible memories—memories of things that made me love you—memories of words that made me love you—memories that now are horrible to me And how I worshiped you! You were to me something apart from common life a thing pure, noble honest without stain The world seemed to me finer because you were in it and goodness more real because you lived And now—oh when I think that I made of a man like you my ideal! the ideal of my life!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN There was your mistake There was your error The error all women commit Why can't you women love us faults and all? Why do you place us on monstrous pedestals? We have all feet of clay women as well as men but when we men love women we love them knowing their weaknesses their follies, their imperfections, love them all the more it may be for that reason It is not the perfect but the imperfect who have need of love It is when we are wounded by our own hands or by the hands of others that love should come to cure us—else what use is love at all? All sins, except a sin against itself Love should forgive All lives save loveless lives true Love should pardon A man's love is like that It is wider, larger more human than a woman's Women think that they are making ideals of men What they are making of us are false idols merely You made your false idol of me and I had not the courage to come down show you my wounds, tell you my weaknesses I was afraid

that I might lose your love as I have lost it now  
 And so, last night you ruined my life for me—yes  
 ruined it! What this woman asked of me was nothing  
 compared to what she offered to me She offered  
 security peace, stability The sin of my youth that  
 I had thought was buried, rose up in front of me  
 hideous, horrible, with its hands at my throat I  
 could have killed it forever, sent it back into its  
 tomb destroyed its record, burned the one witness  
 10 against me You prevented me No one but you you  
 know it And now what is there before me but pub-  
 lic disgrace, ruin, terrible shame the mockery of  
 the world a lonely dishonored life a lonely dis-  
 honored death it may be, some day<sup>9</sup> Let women  
 make no more ideals of men! let them not put them  
 on altars and bow before them, or they may ruin  
 other lives as completely as you—you whom I have  
 so wildly loved—have ruined mine! (*He passes from*  
*the room* LADY CHILTERN *rushes towards him but*  
 20 *the door is closed when she reaches it Pale with*  
*anguish bewildered helpless she sways like a plant*  
*in the water Her hands, outstretched seem to trem-*  
*ble in the air like blossoms in the wind Then she*  
*flings herself down beside a sofa and buries her*  
*face Her sobs are like the sobs of a child* )

CURTAIN

## ACT III

SCENE—*The Library in LORD GORING's house An*  
*Adams room On the right is the door leading*  
 30 *into the hall On the left the door of the smok-*  
*ing room A pair of folding doors at the back*  
*open into the drawing room The fire is lit*  
 PHIPPS *the butler, is arranging some news*  
*papers on the writing-table The distinction of*  
 PHIPPS *is his impassivity He has been termed*  
*by enthusiasts the Ideal Butler The Sphinx is*  
*not so incommunicable He is a mask with a*  
*manner Of his intellectual or emotional life*  
 40 *history knows nothing He represents the dom-*  
*inance of form*

*Enter LORD GORING in evening dress with a button-*  
*hole He is wearing a silk hat and Inverness*  
*cape White gloved he carries a Louis Seize*  
*cane His are all the delicate fopperies of Fash-*  
*ion One sees that he stands in immediate rela-*  
*tion to modern life makes it indeed, and so*  
*masters it He is the first well-dressed philos-*  
*opher in the history of thought*

LORD GORING Got my second buttonhole for me,  
 50 Phipps?

PHIPPS Yes my lord (*Takes his hat, cane and*  
*cape and presents new buttonhole on salver* )

LORD GORING Rather distinguished thing Phipps  
 I am the only person of the smallest importance in  
 London at present who wears a buttonhole

PHIPPS Yes my lord I have observed that

LORD GORING (*taking out old buttonhole*) You  
 see Phipps Fashion is what one wears oneself What  
 is unfashionable is what other people wear

PHIPPS Yes my lord

LORD GORING Just as vulgarity is simply the  
 conduct of other people

PHIPPS Yes my lord

LORD GORING (*putting in new buttonhole*) And  
 falsehoods the truths of other people

PHIPPS Yes my lord

LORD GORING Other people are quite dreadful  
 The only possible society is oneself

PHIPPS Yes, my lord

LORD GORING To love oneself is the beginning of  
 a life long romance Phipps

PHIPPS Yes my lord

LORD GORING (*looking at himself in the glass*)  
 Don't think I quite like this buttonhole Phipps  
 Makes me look a little too old Makes me almost in  
 the prime of life eh, Phipps?

PHIPPS I don't observe any alteration in your  
 lordship's appearance

LORD GORING You don't Phipps?

PHIPPS No my lord

LORD GORING I am not quite sure For the future  
 a more trivial buttonhole Phipps on Thursday  
 evenings

PHIPPS I will speak to the florist, my lord She  
 has had a loss in her family lately, which perhaps  
 accounts for the lack of triviality your lordship com-  
 plains of in the buttonhole

LORD GORING Extraordinary thing about the lower  
 classes in England—they are always losing their  
 relations

PHIPPS Yes, my lord! They are extremely fortunate  
 in that respect

LORD GORING (*turns round and looks at him*  
 PHIPPS *remains impassive*) Hum! Any letters,  
 Phipps?

PHIPPS Three, my lord! (*Hands letters on a*  
*salver* )

LORD GORING (*takes letters*) Want my cab round  
 in twenty minutes

PHIPPS Yes, my lord (*Goes towards door* )

LORD GORING (*holds up letter in pink envelope*)  
 Ahem! Phipps, when did this letter arrive?

PHIPPS It was brought by hand just after your  
 lordship went to the Club

LORD GORING That will do (*Exit PHIPPS*) Lady  
 Chiltern's handwriting on Lady Chiltern's pink note  
 paper That is rather curious I thought Robert was



to write Wonder what Lady Chiltern has got to say to me? (*Sits at bureau and opens letter, and reads it*) I want you I trust you I am coming to you Gertrude (*Puts down the letter with a puzzled look Then takes it up and reads it again slowly*) I want you I trust you I am coming to you So she has found out everything! Poor woman! Poor woman! (*Pulls out watch and looks at it*) But what an hour to call! Ten o'clock! I shall have to give up going to the Berkshires However it is always nice to be expected and not to arrive I am not expected at the Bachelors, so I shall certainly go there Well I will make her stand by her husband That is the only thing for her to do That is the only thing for any woman to do It is the growth of the moral sense in woman that makes marriage such a hopeless one sided institution Ten o'clock She should be here soon I must tell Phipps I am not in to any one else (*Goes towards bell*)

Enter PHIPPS

PHIPPS Lord Caversham

LORD GORING Oh why will parents always appear at the wrong time? Some extraordinary mistake in nature I suppose (*Enter LORD CAVERSHAM*) Delighted to see you my dear father (*Goes to meet him*)

LORD CAVERSHAM Take my cloak off

LORD GORING Is it worth while father?

LORD CAVERSHAM Of course it is worth while sir Which is the most comfortable chair?

LORD GORING This one, father It is the chair I use myself when I have visitors

LORD CAVERSHAM Thank ye No draught I hope in this room?

LORD GORING No, father

LORD CAVERSHAM (*sitting down*) Glad to hear it Can't stand draughts No draughts at home

LORD GORING Good many breezes, father

LORD CAVERSHAM Eh? Eh? Don't understand what you mean Want to have a serious conversation with you sir

LORD GORING My dear father! At this hour?

LORD CAVERSHAM Well sir it is only ten o'clock What is your objection to the hour? I think the hour is an admirable hour!

LORD GORING Well the fact is father this is not my day for talking seriously I am very sorry, but it is not my day

LORD CAVERSHAM What do you mean sir?

LORD GORING During the season, father I only talk seriously on the first Tuesday in every month from four to seven

LORD CAVERSHAM Well make it Tuesday sir make it Tuesday

LORD GORING But it is after seven, father and my

doctor says I must not have any serious conversation after seven It makes me talk in my sleep

LORD CAVERSHAM Talk in your sleep sir? What does that matter? You are not married

LORD GORING No father I am not married

LORD CAVERSHAM Hum! That is what I have come to talk to you about sir You have got to get married, and at once Why when I was your age sir, I had been an inconsolable widower for three months and was already plying my addresses to your admirable mother Damme sir it is your duty to get married You can't be always living for pleasure Every man of position is married nowadays Bachelors are not fashionable any more They are a damaged lot Too much is known about them You must get a wife sir Look where your friend Robert Chiltern has got to by probity hard work, and a sensible marriage with a good woman Why don't you imitate him sir? Why don't you take him for your model?

LORD GORING I think I shall father

LORD CAVERSHAM I wish you would sir Then I should be happy At present I make your mother's life miserable on your account You are heartless sir quite heartless

LORD GORING I hope not father

LORD CAVERSHAM And it is high time for you to get married You are thirty-four years of age sir

LORD GORING Yes father, but I only admit to thirty two—thirty one and a half when I have a really good buttonhole This buttonhole is not trivial enough

LORD CAVERSHAM I tell you you are thirty four sir And there is a draught in your room, besides which makes your conduct worse Why did you tell me there was no draught sir? I feel a draught sir I feel it distinctly

LORD GORING So do I father It is a dreadful draught I will come and see you to-morrow, father We can talk over anything you like Let me help you on with your cloak father

LORD CAVERSHAM No sir, I have called this evening for a definite purpose and I am going to see it through at all costs to my health or yours Put down my cloak sir

LORD GORING Certainly, father But let us go into another room (*Rings bell*) There is a dreadful draught here (*Enter PHIPPS*) Phipps, is there a good fire in the smoking-room?

PHIPPS Yes my lord

LORD GORING Come in there, father Your sneezes are quite heart-rending

LORD CAVERSHAM Well, sir I suppose I have a right to sneeze when I choose?

LORD GORING (*apologetically*) Quite so, father I was merely expressing sympathy

LORD CAVERSHAM Oh damn sympathy There is

a great deal too much of that sort of thing going on nowadays

LORD GORING I quite agree with you father If there was less sympathy in the world there would be less trouble in the world

LORD CAVERSHAM (*going towards the smoking-room*) That is a paradox sir I hate paradoxes

LORD GORING So do I father Everybody one meets is a paradox nowadays It is a great bore It makes society so obvious

LORD CAVERSHAM (*turning round and looking at his son beneath his bushy eyebrows*) Do you always really understand what you say sir?

LORD GORING (*after some hesitation*) Yes, father, if I listen attentively

LORD CAVERSHAM (*indignantly*) If you listen attentively! Conceited young puppy! (*Goes off grumbling into the smoking room PHIPPS enters*)

LORD GORING Phipps, there is a lady coming to see me this evening on particular business Show her into the drawing room when she arrives You understand?

PHIPPS Yes my lord

LORD GORING It is a matter of the gravest importance, Phipps

PHIPPS I understand my lord

LORD GORING No one else is to be admitted under any circumstances

PHIPPS I understand my lord (*Bell rings*)

LORD GORING Ah! that is probably the lady I shall see her myself (*Just as he is going towards the door LORD CAVERSHAM enters from the smoking room*)

LORD CAVERSHAM Well, sir? am I to wait attendance on you?

LORD GORING (*considerably perplexed*) In a moment, father Do excuse me (*LORD CAVERSHAM goes back*) Well remember my instructions, Phipps—into that room

PHIPPS Yes my lord (*LORD GORING goes into the smoking room HAROLD the footman, shows*

MRS CHEVELEY in *Lamia* like, she is in green and silver She has a cloak of black satin lined with dead rose leaf silk

HAROLD What name madam?

MRS CHEVELEY (*to PHIPPS who advances towards her*) Is Lord Goring not here? I was told he was at home?

PHIPPS His lordship is engaged at present with Lord Caversham, madam (*Turns a cold glassy eye on HAROLD, who at once retires*)

MRS CHEVELEY (*to herself*) How very filial!

PHIPPS His lordship told me to ask you, madam to be kind enough to wait in the drawing room for him His lordship will come to you there

MRS CHEVELEY (*with a look of surprise*) Lord Goring expects me?

PHIPPS Yes madam

MRS CHEVELEY Are you quite sure?

PHIPPS His lordship told me that if a lady called I was to ask her to wait in the drawing room (*Goes to the door of the drawing room and opens it*) His lordship's directions on the subject were very precise

MRS CHEVELEY (*to herself*) How thoughtful of him! To expect the unexpected shows a thoroughly modern intellect (*Goes towards the drawing room and looks in*) Ugh! How dreary a bachelor's drawing-room always looks I shall have to alter all this (*PHIPPS brings the lamp from the writing table*) No I don't care for that lamp It is far too glaring Light some candles

PHIPPS (*replaces lamp*) Certainly, madam

MRS CHEVELEY I hope the candles have very becoming shades

PHIPPS We have had no complaints about them, madam as yet (*Passes into the drawing room and begins to light the candles*)

MRS CHEVELEY (*to herself*) I wonder what woman he is waiting for to night It will be delightful to catch him Men always look so silly when they are caught And they are always being caught (*Looks about room and approaches the writing table*) What a very interesting room! What a very interesting picture! Wonder what his correspondence is like (*Takes up letters*) Oh what a very uninteresting correspondence! Bills and cards debts and dowagers! Who on earth writes to him on pink paper? How silly to write on pink paper! It looks like the beginning of a middle class romance Romance should never begin with sentiment It should begin with science and end with a settlement (*Puts letter down then takes it up again*) I know that hand writing That is Gertrude Chiltern's I remember it perfectly The ten commandments in every stroke of the pen and the moral law all over the page Wonder what Gertrude is writing to him about? Some thing horrid about me, I suppose How I detest that woman! (*Reads it*) I trust you I want you I am coming to you Gertrude I trust you I want you I am coming to you (*A look of triumph comes over her face She is just about to steal the letter when PHIPPS comes in*)

PHIPPS The candles in the drawing room are lit madam, as you directed

MRS CHEVELEY Thank you (*Rises hastily and slips the letter under a large silver cased blotting book that is lying on the table*)

PHIPPS I trust the shades will be to your liking madam They are the most becoming we have They are the same as his lordship uses himself when he is dressing for dinner

MRS CHEVELEY (*with a smile*) Then I am sure they will be perfectly right

PHIPPS (*gravely*) Thank you madam (*MRS CHEVELEY goes into the drawing room PHIPPS closes*

*the door and retires The door is then slowly opened and MRS CHEVELEY comes out and creeps stealthily towards the writing table Suddenly voices are heard from the smoking room MRS CHEVELEY grows pale, and stops The voices grow louder and she goes back into the drawing room, biting her lip )*

*Enter LORD GORING and LORD CAVERSHAM*

LORD GORING (*expostulating*) My dear father if I am to get married surely you will allow me to choose the time place and person? Particularly the person

LORD CAVERSHAM (*testily*) That is a matter for me sir You would probably make a very poor choice It is I who should be consulted, not you There is property at stake It is not a matter for affection Affection comes later on in married life

LORD GORING Yes In married life affection comes where people thoroughly dislike each other father, doesn't it? (*Puts on LORD CAVERSHAM'S cloak for him*)

LORD CAVERSHAM Certainly sir I mean certainly not sir You are talking very foolishly to night What I say is that marriage is a matter for common sense

LORD GORING But women who have common sense are so curiously plain father aren't they? Of course I only speak from hearsay

LORD CAVERSHAM No woman plain or pretty, has any common sense at all sir Common sense is the privilege of our sex

LORD GORING Quite so And we men are so self-sacrificing that we never use it do we, father?

LORD CAVERSHAM I use it sir I use nothing else

LORD GORING So my mother tells me

LORD CAVERSHAM It is the secret of your mother's happiness You are very heartless sir very heartless

LORD GORING I hope not father (*Goes out for a moment Then returns looking rather put out with SIR ROBERT CHILTERN*)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN My dear Arthur what a piece of good luck meeting you on the doorstep! Your servant had just told me you were not at home How extraordinary!

LORD GORING The fact is I am horribly busy to night Robert and I gave orders I was not at home to any one Even my father had a comparatively cold reception He complained of a draught the whole time

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Ah! you must be at home to me Arthur You are my best friend Perhaps by to-morrow you will be my only friend My wife has discovered everything

LORD GORING Ah! I guessed as much!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*looking at him*) Really! How?

LORD GORING (*after some hesitation*) Oh merely

by something in the expression of your face as you came in Who told her?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Mrs Cheveley herself And the woman I love knows that I began my career with an act of low dishonesty that I built up my life upon the sands of shame—that I sold like a common huckster the secret that had been intrusted to me as a man of honor I thank heaven poor Lord Radley died without knowing that I betrayed him I would to God I had died before I had been so horribly tempted or had fallen so low (*Burying his face in his hands*)

LORD GORING (*after a pause*) You have heard nothing from Vienna yet in answer to your wire?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*looking up*) Yes I got a telegram from the first secretary at eight o'clock to night

LORD GORING Well?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Nothing is absolutely known against her On the contrary she occupies a rather high position in society It is a sort of open secret that Baron Arnheim left her the greater portion of his immense fortune Beyond that I can learn nothing

LORD GORING She doesn't turn out to be a spy then?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Oh! spies are of no use nowadays Their profession is over The newspapers do their work instead

LORD GORING And thunderingly well they do it

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Arthur I am parched with thirst May I ring for something? Some hock and seltzer?

LORD GORING Certainly Let me (*Rings the bell*)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Thanks! I don't know what to do Arthur I don't know what to do and you are my only friend But what a friend you are—the one friend I can trust I can trust you absolutely can't I?

*Enter PHIPPS*

LORD GORING My dear Robert of course Oh! (*To PHIPPS*) Bring some hock and seltzer

PHIPPS Yes my lord

LORD GORING And, Phipps!

PHIPPS Yes my lord

LORD GORING Will you excuse me for a moment Robert? I want to give some directions to my servant

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Certainly

LORD GORING When that lady calls tell her that I am not expected home this evening Tell her that I have been suddenly called out of town You understand?

PHIPPS The lady is in that room my lord You told me to show her into that room my lord

LORD GORING You did perfectly right (*Exit PHIPPS*) What a mess I am in No I think I shall

get through it I'll give her a lecture through the door Awkward thing to manage though

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Arthur, tell me what I should do My life seems to have crumbled about me I am a ship without a rudder in a night without a star

LORD GORING Robert you love your wife, don't you?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I love her more than any thing in the world I used to think ambition the great thing It is not Love is the great thing in the world There is nothing but love and I love her But I am defamed in her eyes I am ignoble in her eyes There is a wide gulf between us now She has found me out Arthur she has found me out

LORD GORING Has she never in her life done some folly—some indiscretion—that she should not forgive your sin?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN My wife! Never! She does not know what weakness or temptation is I am of clay like other men She stands apart as good women do—pitiless in her perfection—cold and stern and without mercy But I love her, Arthur We are childless, and I have no one else to love, no one else to love me Perhaps if God had sent us children she might have been kinder to me But God has given us a lonely house And she has cut my heart in two Don't let us talk of it I was brutal to her this evening But I suppose when sinners talk to saints they are brutal always I said to her things that were hideously true on my side from my standpoint from the standpoint of men But don't let us talk of that

LORD GORING Your wife will forgive you Perhaps at this moment she is forgiving you She loves you, Robert Why should she not forgive?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN God grant it! God grant it! (*Buries his face in his hands*) But there is some thing more I have to tell you Arthur

*Enter PHIPPS with drinks*

PHIPPS (*hands hock and seltzer to SIR ROBERT CHILTERN*) Hock and seltzer sir

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Thank you

LORD GORING Is your carriage here, Robert?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN No I walked from the club

LORD GORING Sir Robert will take my cab, Phipps

PHIPPS Yes my lord

LORD GORING Robert you don't mind my sending you away?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Arthur you must let me stay for five minutes I have made up my mind what I am going to do to night in the House The debate on the Argentine Canal is to begin at eleven (*A chair falls in the drawing room*) What is that?

LORD GORING Nothing

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I heard a chair fall in the next room Some one has been listening

LORD GORING No no, there is no one there

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN There is some one There are lights in the room and the door is ajar Some one has been listening to every secret of my life Arthur what does this mean?

LORD GORING Robert you are excited unneerved I tell you there is no one in that room Sit down Robert

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Do you give me your word that there is no one there?

LORD GORING Yes

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Your word of honor? (*Sits down*)

LORD GORING Yes

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*rises*) Arthur, let me see for myself

LORD GORING No, no

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN If there is no one there why should I not look in that room? Arthur you must let me go into that room and satisfy myself Let me know that no eavesdropper has heard my life's secret Arthur, you don't realize what I am going through

LORD GORING Robert, this must stop I have told you that there is no one in that room—that is enough

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*rushes to the door of the room*) It is not enough I insist on going into this room You have told me there is no one there so what reason can you have for refusing me?

LORD GORING For God's sake, don't! There is some one there Some one whom you must not see

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Ah I thought so!

LORD GORING I forbid you to enter that room

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Stand back My life is at stake And I don't care who is there I will know who it is to whom I have told my secret and my shame (*Enters room*)

LORD GORING Great Heaven! his own wife! (*SIR ROBERT comes back, with a look of scorn and anger on his face*)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN What explanation have you to give me for the presence of that woman here?

LORD GORING Robert I swear to you on my honor that that lady is stainless and guiltless of all offense towards you

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN She is a vile, an infamous thing!

LORD GORING Don't say that Robert! It was for your sake she came here It was to try and save you she came here She loves you and no one else

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN You are mad What have I to do with her intrigues with you? Let her remain your mistress! You are well suited to each other She, corrupt and shameful—you false as a friend treacherous as an enemy even—

LORD GORING It is not true Robert Before heaven

it is not true In her presence and in yours I will explain all

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Let me pass sir You have lied enough upon your word of honor (SIR ROBERT CHILTERN goes out LORD GORING rushes to the door of the drawing room when MRS CHEVELEY comes out looking radiant and much amused)

MRS CHEVELEY (with a mock curtesy) Good evening Lord Goring!

10 LORD GORING Mrs Cheveley! Great Heavens! May I ask what you were doing in my drawing-room?

MRS CHEVELEY Merely listening I have a perfect passion for listening through keyholes One always hears such wonderful things through them

LORD GORING Doesn't that sound rather like tempting Providence?

MRS CHEVELEY Oh! surely Providence can resist temptation by this time (Makes a sign to him to take her cloak off which he does)

LORD GORING I am glad you have called I am going to give you some good advice

MRS CHEVELEY Oh! pray don't One should never give a woman anything that she can't wear in the evening

LORD GORING I see you are quite as willful as you used to be

MRS CHEVELEY Far more! I have greatly improved I have had more experience

30 LORD GORING Too much experience is a dangerous thing Pray have a cigarette Half the pretty women in London smoke cigarettes Personally I prefer the other half

MRS CHEVELEY Thanks I never smoke My dressmaker wouldn't like it and a woman's first duty in life is to her dressmaker isn't it? What the second duty is no one has as yet discovered

LORD GORING You have come here to sell me Robert Chiltern's letter haven't you?

40 MRS CHEVELEY To offer it to you on conditions How did you guess that?

LORD GORING Because you haven't mentioned the subject Have you got it with you?

MRS CHEVELEY (sitting down) Oh no! A well-made dress has no pockets

LORD GORING What is your price for it?

MRS CHEVELEY How absurdly English you are! The English think that a check book can solve every problem in life Why my dear Arthur I have very much more money than you have, and quite as much as Robert Chiltern has got hold of Money is not what I want

LORD GORING What do you want then Miss Cheveley?

MRS CHEVELEY Why don't you call me Laura?

LORD GORING I don't like the name

MRS CHEVELEY You used to adore it

LORD GORING Yes, that's why (MRS CHEVELEY motions to him to sit down beside her He smiles and does so)

60

MRS CHEVELEY Arthur, you loved me once

LORD GORING Yes

MRS CHEVELEY And you asked me to be your wife

LORD GORING That was the natural result of my loving you

MRS CHEVELEY And you threw me over because you saw or said you saw, poor old Lord Mortlake trying to have a violent flirtation with me in the conservatory at Tenby

70

LORD GORING I am under the impression that my lawyer settled that matter with you on certain terms dictated by yourself

MRS CHEVELEY At that time I was poor you were rich

LORD GORING Quite so That is why you pretended to love me

MRS CHEVELEY (shrugging her shoulders) Poor old Lord Mortlake, who had only two topics of conversation, his gout and his wife I never could quite make out which of the two he was talking about He used the most horrible language about them both Well you were silly, Arthur Why Lord Mortlake was never anything more to me than an amusement One of those utterly tedious amusements one only finds at an English country house on an English country Sunday I don't think any one at all morally responsible for what he or she does at an English country house

80

LORD GORING Yes I know lots of people think that

MRS CHEVELEY I loved you Arthur

LORD GORING My dear Mrs Cheveley you have always been far too clever to know anything about love

MRS CHEVELEY I did love you And you loved me You know you loved me and love is a very wonderful thing I suppose that when a man has once loved a woman he will do anything for her, except continue to love her? (Puts her hand on his)

100

LORD GORING (taking his hand away quietly) Yes except that

MRS CHEVELEY (after a pause) I am tired of living abroad I want to come back to London I want to have a charming house here I want to have a salon If one could only teach the English how to talk and the Irish how to listen society here would be quite civilized Besides I have arrived at the romantic stage When I saw you last night at the Chilterns I knew you were the only person I had ever cared for if I ever have cared for anybody, Arthur And so on the morning of the day you marry me I will give you Robert Chiltern's letter That is my

110

offer I will give it to you now, if you promise to marry me

LORD GORING Now?

MRS CHEVELEY (*smiling*) To-morrow

LORD GORING Are you really serious?

MRS CHEVELEY Yes quite serious

LORD GORING I should make you a very bad husband

10 MRS CHEVELEY I don't mind bad husbands I have had two They amused me immensely

LORD GORING You mean that you amused yourself immensely don't you?

MRS CHEVELEY What do you know about my married life?

LORD GORING Nothing but I can read it like a book

MRS CHEVELEY What book?

LORD GORING (*rising*) The Book of Numbers

20 MRS CHEVELEY Do you think it quite charming of you to be so rude to a woman in your own house?

LORD GORING In the case of very fascinating women, sex is a challenge not a defense

MRS CHEVELEY I suppose that is meant for a compliment My dear Arthur women are never disarmed by compliments Men always are That is the difference between the two sexes

LORD GORING Women are never disarmed by anything as far as I know them

30 MRS CHEVELEY (*after a pause*) Then you are going to allow your greatest friend Robert Chiltern to be ruined, rather than marry some one who really has considerable attractions left? I thought you would have risen to some great height of self sacrifice Arthur I think you should And the rest of your life you could spend in contemplating your own perfections

40 LORD GORING Oh! I do that as it is And self sacrifice is a thing that should be put down by law It is so demoralizing to the people for whom one sacrifices oneself They always go to the bad

MRS CHEVELEY As if anything could demoralize Robert Chiltern! You seem to forget that I know his real character

LORD GORING What you know about him is not his real character It was an act of folly done in his youth dishonorable I admit shameful I admit unworthy of him I admit, and therefore not his true character

50 MRS CHEVELEY How you men stand up for each other!

LORD GORING How you women war against each other!

MRS CHEVELEY (*bitterly*) I only war against one woman against Gertrude Chiltern I hate her I hate her now more than ever

LORD GORING Because you have brought a real tragedy into her life I suppose

MRS CHEVELEY (*with a sneer*) Oh, there is only one real tragedy in a woman's life The fact that her past is always her lover and her future invariably her husband 60

LORD GORING Lady Chiltern knows nothing of the kind of life to which you are alluding

MRS CHEVELEY A woman whose size in gloves is seven and three quarters never knows much about anything You know Gertrude has always worn seven and three quarters? That is one of the reasons why there was never any moral sympathy between us

Well, Arthur I suppose this romantic interview may be regarded as at an end You admit it was romantic don't you? For the privilege of being your wife I was ready to surrender a great prize the climax of my diplomatic career You decline Very well If Sir Robert doesn't uphold my Argentine scheme I expose him *Voila tout* 70

LORD GORING You mustn't do that It would be vile horrible infamous

MRS CHEVELEY (*shrugging her shoulders*) Oh! don't use big words They mean so little It is a commercial transaction That is all There is no good mixing up sentimentality in it I offer to sell Robert Chiltern a certain thing If he won't pay me my price he will have to pay the world a greater price There is no more to be said I must go Good by Won't you shake hands? 80

LORD GORING With you? No Your transaction with Robert Chiltern may pass as a loathsome commercial transaction of a loathsome commercial age but you seem to have forgotten that you who came here to night to talk of love you whose lips desecrated the word love you to whom the thing is a book closely sealed went this afternoon to the house of one of the most noble and gentle women in the world to degrade her husband in her eyes, to try and kill her love for him to put poison in her heart and bitterness in her life to break her idol and it may be spoil her soul That I cannot forgive you That was horrible For that there can be no forgiveness 90

MRS CHEVELEY Arthur you are unjust to me Believe me, you are quite unjust to me I didn't go to taunt Gertrude at all I had no idea of doing anything of the kind when I entered I called with Lady Markby simply to ask whether an ornament, a jewel that I lost somewhere last night had been found at the Chilterns If you don't believe me, you can ask Lady Markby She will tell you it is true The scene that occurred happened after Lady Markby had left and was really forced on me by Gertrude's rudeness and sneers I called, oh!—a little out of malice if you like—but really to ask if a diamond brooch of mine had been found That was the origin of the whole thing 100

LORD GORING A diamond snake brooch with a ruby? 110

MRS CHEVELEY Yes How do you know?

LORD GORING Because it is found In point of fact I found it myself and stupidly forgot to tell the butler anything about it as I was leaving (*Goes over to the writing table and pulls out the drawers*) It is in this drawer No that one This is the brooch isn't it? (*Holds up the brooch*)

MRS CHEVELEY Yes I am so glad to get it back It was a present

10 LORD GORING Won't you wear it?

MRS CHEVELEY Certainly if you pin it in (LORD GORING suddenly clasps it on her arm) Why do you put it on as a bracelet? I never knew it could be worn as a bracelet

LORD GORING Really?

MRS CHEVELEY (*holding out her handsome arm*) No but it looks very well on me as a bracelet, doesn't it?

20 LORD GORING Yes much better than when I saw it last

MRS CHEVELEY When did you see it last?

LORD GORING (*calmly*) Oh ten years ago, on Lady Berkshire from whom you stole it

MRS CHEVELEY (*starting*) What do you mean?

LORD GORING I mean that you stole that ornament from my cousin Mary Berkshire, to whom I gave it when she was married Suspicion fell on a wretched servant who was sent away in disgrace I recognized it last night I determined to say nothing about it till I had found the thief I have found the thief now and I have heard her own confession

30 MRS CHEVELEY (*tossing her head*) It is not true

LORD GORING You know it is true Why, thief is written across your face at this moment

MRS CHEVELEY I will deny the whole affair from beginning to end I will say that I have never seen this wretched thing that it was never in my possession (MRS CHEVELEY tries to get the bracelet off her arm but fails LORD GORING looks on amused  
40 Her thin fingers tear at the jewel to no purpose A curse breaks from her)

LORD GORING The drawback of stealing a thing Mrs Cheveley is that one never knows how wonderful the thing that one steals is You can't get that bracelet off unless you know where the spring is And I see you don't know where the spring is It is rather difficult to find

MRS CHEVELEY You brute! You coward! (*She tries again to unclasp the bracelet but fails*)

50 LORD GORING Oh! don't use big words They mean so little

MRS CHEVELEY (*again tears at the bracelet in a paroxysm of rage with inarticulate sounds Then stops and looks at LORD GORING*) What are you going to do?

LORD GORING I am going to ring for my servant He is an admirable servant Always comes in the

moment one rings for him When he comes I will tell him to fetch the police

MRS CHEVELEY (*trembling*) The police? What for? 60

LORD GORING To-morrow the Berkshires will prosecute you That is what the police are for

MRS CHEVELEY (*is now in an agony of physical terror Her face is distorted Her mouth awry A mask has fallen from her She is for the moment dreadful to look at*) Don't do that I will do anything you want Anything in the world you want

LORD GORING Give me Robert Chiltern's letter

MRS CHEVELEY Stop! Stop! Let me have time to think 70

LORD GORING Give me Robert Chiltern's letter

MRS CHEVELEY I have not got it with me I will give it to you to-morrow

LORD GORING You know you are lying Give it to me at once (MRS CHEVELEY pulls the letter out and hands it to him She is horribly pale) This is it?

MRS CHEVELEY (*in a hoarse voice*) Yes

LORD GORING (*takes the letter examines it sighs and burns it over the lamp*) For so well dressed a woman Mrs Cheveley you have moments of admirable common sense I congratulate you 80

MRS CHEVELEY (*catches sight of LADY CHILTERN'S letter the cover of which is just showing from under the blotting book*) Please get me a glass of water

LORD GORING Certainly (*Goes to the corner of the room and pours out a glass of water While his back is turned MRS CHEVELEY steals LADY CHILTERN'S letter When LORD GORING returns with the glass she refuses it with a gesture*) 90

MRS CHEVELEY Thank you Will you help me on with my cloak?

LORD GORING With pleasure (*Puts her cloak on*)

MRS CHEVELEY Thanks I am never going to try to harm Robert Chiltern again

LORD GORING Fortunately you have not the chance Mrs Cheveley

MRS CHEVELEY Well if even I had the chance, I wouldn't On the contrary I am going to render him a great service 100

LORD GORING I am charmed to hear it It is a reformation

MRS CHEVELEY Yes I can't bear so upright a gentleman, so honorable an English gentleman being so shamefully deceived, and so—

LORD GORING Well?

MRS CHEVELEY I find that somehow Gertrude Chiltern's dying speech and confession has stayed into my pocket

LORD GORING What do you mean? 110

MRS CHEVELEY (*with a bitter note of triumph in her voice*) I mean that I am going to send Robert Chiltern the love letter his wife wrote to you to-night



LORD GORING Love letter?

MRS CHEVELEY (*laughing*) I want you I trust you I am coming to you Gertrude (LORD GORING *rushes to the bureau and takes up the envelope, finds it empty and turns round*)

LORD GORING You wretched woman must you always be thieving? Give me back that letter I'll take it from you by force You shall not leave my room till I have got it (*He rushes towards her but* 10 *MRS CHEVELEY at once puts her hand on the electric bell that is on the table The bell sounds with shrill reverberations and PHIPPS enters*)

MRS CHEVELEY (*after a pause*) Lord Goring merely rang that you should show me out Good-night, Lord Goring! (*Goes out, followed by PHIPPS Her face is illumined with evil triumph There is joy in her eyes Youth seems to have come back to her Her last glance is like a swift arrow LORD GORING bites his lip and lights a cigarette*)

20 CURTAIN

## ACT IV

### SCENE—Same as Act II

(LORD GORING is standing by the fireplace with his hands in his pockets He is looking rather bored)

LORD GORING (*pulls out his watch inspects it, and rings the bell*) It is a great nuisance I can't find any one in this house to talk to And I am full of interesting information I feel like the latest edition of something or other

30 Enter servant

JAMES Sir Robert is still at the Foreign Office my lord

LORD GORING Lady Chiltern not down yet?

JAMES Her ladyship has not yet left her room Miss Chiltern has just come in from riding

LORD GORING (*to himself*) Ah! that is something

JAMES Lord Caversham has been waiting some time in the library for Sir Robert I told him your lordship was here

40 LORD GORING Thank you Would you kindly tell him I've gone?

JAMES (*bowing*) I shall do so my lord

(Exit servant)

LORD GORING Really, I don't want to meet my father three days running It is a great deal too much excitement for any son I hope to goodness he won't come up Fathers should be neither seen nor heard That is the only proper basis for family life Mothers are different Mothers are darlings (*Throws himself*

*down into a chair, picks up a paper and begins to read it*) 50

### Enter LORD CAVERSHAM

LORD CAVERSHAM Well sir what are you doing here? Wasting your time as usual, I suppose?

LORD GORING (*throws down paper and rises*) My dear father, when one pays a visit it is for the purpose of wasting other people's time not one's own

LORD CAVERSHAM Have you been thinking over what I spoke to you about last night?

LORD GORING I have been thinking about nothing else 60

LORD CAVERSHAM Engaged to be married yet?

LORD GORING (*genially*) Not yet but I hope to be before lunch-time

LORD CAVERSHAM (*caustically*) You can have till dinner time if it would be of any convenience to you

LORD GORING Thanks awfully but I think I'd sooner be engaged before lunch

LORD CAVERSHAM Humph! Never know when you are serious or not 70

LORD GORING Neither do I father (*A pause*)

LORD CAVERSHAM I suppose you have read The Times this morning?

LORD GORING (*avily*) The Times? Certainly not I only read The Morning Post All that one should know about modern life is where the Duchesses are anything else is quite demoralizing

LORD CAVERSHAM Do you mean to say you have not read The Times leading article on Robert Chiltern's career? 80

LORD GORING Great heavens! No What does it say?

LORD CAVERSHAM What should it say sir? Every thing complimentary, of course Chiltern's speech last night on this Argentine Canal scheme was one of the finest pieces of oratory ever delivered in the House since Canning

LORD GORING Ah! Never heard of Canning Never wanted to And did did Chiltern uphold the scheme? 90

LORD CAVERSHAM Uphold it, sir? How little you know him! Why he denounced it roundly and the whole system of modern political finance This speech is the turning point in his career as The Times points out You should read this article, sir (*Opens The Times*) Sir Robert Chiltern

most rising of all our young statesmen Brilliant orator Unblemished career Well known integrity of character Represents what is best in English public life Noble contrast to the lax morality so common among foreign politicians They will never say that of you sir 100

LORD GORING I sincerely hope not father However, I am delighted at what you tell me about

Robert thoroughly delighted It shows he has got pluck

LORD CAVERSHAM He has got more than pluck sir he has got genius

LORD GORING Ah! I prefer pluck It is not so common nowadays as genius is

LORD CAVERSHAM I wish you would go into Parliament

10 LORD GORING My dear father only people who look dull ever get into the House of Commons and only people who are dull ever succeed there

LORD CAVERSHAM Why don't you try to do something useful in life?

LORD GORING I am far too young

LORD CAVERSHAM (*testily*) I hate this affectation of youth sir It is a great deal too prevalent nowadays

LORD GORING Youth isn't an affectation Youth is an art

20 LORD CAVERSHAM Why don't you propose to that pretty Miss Chiltern?

LORD GORING I am of a very nervous disposition, especially in the morning

LORD CAVERSHAM I don't suppose there is the smallest chance of her accepting you

LORD GORING I don't know how the betting stands to day

LORD CAVERSHAM If she did accept you she would be the prettiest fool in England

30 LORD GORING That is just what I should like to marry A thoroughly sensible wife would reduce me to a condition of absolute idiocy in less than six months

LORD CAVERSHAM You don't deserve her sir

LORD GORING My dear father if we men married the women we deserved, we should have a very bad time of it

*Enter MABEL CHILTERN*

40 MABEL CHILTERN Oh! How do you do, Lord Caversham? I hope Lady Caversham is quite well?

LORD CAVERSHAM Lady Caversham is as usual as usual

LORD GORING Good morning Miss Mabel!

MABEL CHILTERN (*taking no notice at all of LORD GORING and addressing herself exclusively to LORD CAVERSHAM*) And Lady Caversham's bonnets are they at all better?

50 LORD CAVERSHAM They have had a serious relapse, I am sorry to say

LORD GORING Good morning Miss Mabel!

MABEL CHILTERN (*to LORD CAVERSHAM*) I hope an operation will not be necessary

LORD CAVERSHAM (*smiling at her pertness*) If it is we shall have to give Lady Caversham a narcotic

Otherwise she would never consent to have a feather touched

LORD GORING (*with increased emphasis*) Good morning Miss Mabel!

60 MABEL CHILTERN (*turning round with feigned surprise*) Oh are you here? Of course you understand that after your breaking your appointment I am never going to speak to you again

LORD GORING Oh, please don't say such a thing You are the one person in London I really like to have to listen to me

MABEL CHILTERN Lord Goring I never believe a single word that either you or I say to each other

LORD CAVERSHAM You are quite right my dear quite right as far as he is concerned, I mean 70

MABEL CHILTERN Do you think you could possibly make your son behave a little better occasionally? Just as a change

LORD CAVERSHAM I regret to say Miss Chiltern that I have no influence at all over my son I wish I had If I had I know what I would make him do

MABEL CHILTERN I am afraid that he has one of those terribly weak natures that are not susceptible to influence

LORD CAVERSHAM He is very heartless very heart 80 less

LORD GORING It seems to me that I am a little in the way here

MABEL CHILTERN It is very good for you to be in the way and to know what people say of you behind your back

LORD GORING I don't at all like knowing what people say of me behind my back It makes me far too conceited

LORD CAVERSHAM After that my dear, I really 90 must bid you good morning

MABEL CHILTERN Oh! I hope you are not going to leave me all alone with Lord Goring? Especially at such an early hour in the day

LORD CAVERSHAM I am afraid I can't take him with me to Downing Street It is not the Prime Minister's day for seeing the unemployed (*Shakes hands with MABEL CHILTERN takes up his hat and stick and goes out, with a parting glare of indignation at LORD GORING*) 100

MABEL CHILTERN (*takes up roses and begins to arrange them in a bowl on the table*) People who don't keep their appointments in the Park are horrid

LORD GORING Detestable

MABEL CHILTERN I am glad you admit it But I wish you wouldn't look so pleased about it

LORD GORING I can't help it I always look pleased when I am with you

MABEL CHILTERN (*sadly*) Then I suppose it is my duty to remain with you? 110

LORD GORING Of course it is

MABEL CHILTERN Well, my duty is a thing I never

do on principle It depresses me So I am afraid I must leave you

LORD GORING Please don't Miss Mabel I have something very particular to say to you

MABEL CHILTERN (*rapturously*) Oh! is it a proposal?

LORD GORING (*somewhat taken aback*) Well yes it is—I am bound to say it is

MABEL CHILTERN (*with a sigh of pleasure*) I am so glad That makes the second to-day

LORD GORING (*indignantly*) The second to-day? What conceited ass has been impertinent enough to dare to propose to you before I had proposed to you?

MABEL CHILTERN Tommy Trafford of course It is one of Tommy's days for proposing He always proposes on Tuesdays and Thursdays, during the season

LORD GORING You didn't accept him I hope?

MABEL CHILTERN I make it a rule never to accept Tommy That is why he goes on proposing Of course as you didn't turn up this morning, I very nearly said yes It would have been an excellent lesson both for him and for you if I had It would have taught you both better manners

LORD GORING Oh! bother Tommy Trafford Tommy is a silly little ass I love you

MABEL CHILTERN I know And I think you might have mentioned it before I am sure I have given you heaps of opportunities

LORD GORING Mabel, do be serious Please be serious

MABEL CHILTERN Ah! that is the sort of thing a man always says to a girl before he has been married to her He never says it afterwards

LORD GORING (*taking hold of her hand*) Mabel, I have told you that I love you Can't you love me a little in return?

MABEL CHILTERN You silly Arthur! If you knew anything about anything which you don't you would know that I adore you Every one in London knows it except you It is a public scandal the way I adore you I have been going about for the last six months telling the whole of society that I adore you I wonder you consent to have anything to say to me I have no character left at all At least I feel so happy that I am quite sure I have no character left at all

LORD GORING (*catches her in his arms and kisses her Then there is a pause of bliss*) Dear! Do you know I was awfully afraid of being refused!

MABEL CHILTERN (*looking up at him*) But you never have been refused yet by anybody, have you, Arthur? I can't imagine any one refusing you

LORD GORING (*after kissing her again*) Of course I'm not nearly good enough for you Mabel

MABEL CHILTERN (*nestling close to him*) I am so glad, darling I was afraid you were

LORD GORING (*after some hesitation*) And I'm I'm a little over thirty

MABEL CHILTERN Dear you look weeks younger than that

LORD GORING (*enthusiastically*) How sweet of you to say so! And it is only fair to tell you frankly that I am fearfully extravagant

MABEL CHILTERN But so am I Arthur So were sure to agree And now I must go and see Gertrude

LORD GORING Must you really? (*Kisses her*)

MABEL CHILTERN Yes

LORD GORING Then do tell her I want to talk to her particularly I have been waiting here all the morning to see either her or Robert

MABEL CHILTERN Do you mean to say you didn't come here expressly to propose to me?

LORD GORING (*triumphantly*) No, that was a flash of genius

MABEL CHILTERN Your first

LORD GORING (*with determination*) My last

MABEL CHILTERN I am delighted to hear it Now don't stir I'll be back in five minutes And don't fall into any temptations while I am away

LORD GORING Dear Mabel, while you are away there are none It makes me horribly dependent on you

*Enter LADY CHILTERN*

LADY CHILTERN Good morning dear How pretty you are looking!

MABEL CHILTERN How pale you are looking Gertrude! It is most becoming!

LADY CHILTERN Good morning Lord Goring!

LORD GORING (*bowing*) Good morning, Lady Chiltern!

MABEL CHILTERN (*aside to LORD GORING*) I shall be in the conservatory, under the second palm tree on the left

LORD GORING Second on the left?

MABEL CHILTERN (*with a look of mock surprise*) Yes the usual palm tree (*Blows a kiss to him unobserved by LADY CHILTERN, and goes out*)

LORD GORING Lady Chiltern, I have a certain amount of very good news to tell you Mrs Cheveley gave me up Robert's letter last night, and I burned it Robert is safe

LADY CHILTERN (*sinking on the sofa*) Safe! Oh! I am so glad of that What a good friend you are to him—to us!

LORD GORING There is only one person now that could be said to be in any danger

LADY CHILTERN Who is that?

LORD GORING (*sitting down beside her*) Yourself

LADY CHILTERN I! In danger? What do you mean?

LORD GORING Danger is too great a word It is a word I should not have used But I admit I have something to tell you that may distress you, that

terribly distresses me Yesterday evening you wrote me a very beautiful womanly letter, asking me for my help You wrote to me as one of your oldest friends one of your husband's oldest friends Mrs Cheveley stole that letter from my rooms

LADY CHILTERN Well what use is it to her? Why should she not have it?

LORD GORING (*rising*) Lady Chiltern, I will be quite frank with you Mrs Cheveley puts a certain construction on that letter and proposes to send it to your husband

LADY CHILTERN But what construction could she put on it? Oh! not that! not that! If I in—trouble and wanting your help, trusting you, propose to come to you that you may advise me assist me Oh! are there women so horrible as that? And she proposes to send it to my husband? Tell me what happened Tell me all that happened

LORD GORING Mrs Cheveley was concealed in a room adjoining my library, without my knowledge I thought that the person who was waiting in that room to see me was yourself Robert came in unexpectedly A chair or something fell in the room He forced his way in and he discovered her We had a terrible scene I still thought it was you He left me in anger At the end of everything Mrs Cheveley got possession of your letter—she stole it, when or how I don't know

LADY CHILTERN At what hour did this happen?

LORD GORING At half-past ten And now I propose that we tell Robert the whole thing at once

LADY CHILTERN (*looking at him with amazement that is almost terror*) You want me to tell Robert that the woman you expected was not Mrs Cheveley, but myself? That it was I whom you thought was concealed in a room in your house at half past ten o'clock at night? You want me to tell him that?

LORD GORING I think it is better that he should know the exact truth

LADY CHILTERN (*rising*) Oh, I couldn't I couldn't!

LORD GORING May I do it?

LADY CHILTERN No

LORD GORING (*gravely*) You are wrong, Lady Chiltern

LADY CHILTERN No The letter must be intercepted That is all But how can I do it? Letters arrive for him every moment of the day His secretaries open them and hand them to him I dare not ask the servants to bring me his letters It would be impossible Oh! why don't you tell me what to do?

LORD GORING Pray be calm Lady Chiltern, and answer the questions I am going to put to you You said his secretaries open his letters

LADY CHILTERN Yes

LORD GORING Who is with him to day? Mr Trafford isn't it?

LADY CHILTERN No Mr Montford, I think

LORD GORING You can trust him?

LADY CHILTERN (*with a gesture of despair*) Oh! how do I know?

LORD GORING He would do what you asked him wouldn't he?

LADY CHILTERN I think so

LORD GORING Your letter was on pink paper He could recognize it without reading it, couldn't he? By the color?

LADY CHILTERN I suppose so

LORD GORING Is he in the house now?

LADY CHILTERN Yes

LORD GORING Then I will go and see him myself and tell him that a certain letter, written on pink paper is to be forwarded to Robert today and that at all costs it must not reach him (*Goes to the door and opens it*) Oh! Robert is coming upstairs with the letter in his hand It has reached him already

LADY CHILTERN (*with a cry of pain*) Oh! you have saved his life what have you done with mine!

Enter SIR ROBERT CHILTERN *He has the letter in his hand and is reading it He comes towards his wife not noticing LORD GORING's presence*

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I want you I trust you I am coming to you Gertrude Oh, my love! Is this true? Do you indeed trust me and want me? If so it was for me to come to you not for you to write of coming to me This letter of yours Gertrude makes me feel that nothing that the world may do can hurt me now You want me Gertrude? (*LORD GORING, unseen by SIR ROBERT CHILTERN, makes an imploring sign to LADY CHILTERN to accept the situation and SIR ROBERT'S error*)

LADY CHILTERN Yes

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN You trust me, Gertrude?

LADY CHILTERN Yes

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Ah! why did you not add you loved me?

LADY CHILTERN (*taking his hand*) Because I loved you (*LORD GORING passes into the conservatory*)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*kisses her*) Gertrude you don't know what I feel When Montford passed me your letter across the table—he had opened it by mistake I suppose without looking at the handwriting on the envelope—and I read it—oh! I did not care what disgrace or punishment was in store for me I only thought you loved me still

LADY CHILTERN There is no disgrace in store for you, nor any public shame Mrs Cheveley has handed over to Lord Goring the document that was in her possession and he has destroyed it

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Are you sure of this, Gertrude?

LADY CHILTERN Yes Lord Goring has just told me

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Then I am safe! Oh! what a wonderful thing to be safe! For two days I have been in terror I am safe now How did Arthur destroy my letter? Tell me

LADY CHILTERN He burned it

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I wish I had seen that one sin of my youth burning to ashes How many men there are in modern life who would like to see their past burning to white ashes before them! Is Arthur still here?

LADY CHILTERN Yes, he is in the conservatory

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I am so glad now I made that speech last night in the House so glad I made it thinking that public disgrace might be the result But it has not been so

LADY CHILTERN Public honor has been the result

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I think so I fear so almost For although I am safe from detection although every proof against me is destroyed, I suppose Gertrude I suppose I should retire from public life? (He looks anxiously at his wife)

LADY CHILTERN (eagerly) Oh yes Robert, you should do that It is your duty to do that

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN It is much to surrender

LADY CHILTERN No it will be much to gain (SIR ROBERT CHILTERN walks up and down the room with a troubled expression Then comes over to his wife and puts his hand on her shoulder)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN And you would be happy living somewhere alone with me abroad perhaps or in the country away from London away from public life? You would have no regrets?

LADY CHILTERN Oh! none Robert

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (sadly) And your ambition for me? You used to be ambitious for me

LADY CHILTERN Oh, my ambition! I have none now but that we two may love each other It was your ambition that led you astray Let us not talk about ambition (LORD GORING returns from the conservatory looking very pleased with himself and with an entirely new buttonhole that some one has made for him)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (going towards him) Arthur I have to thank you for what you have done for me I don't know how I can repay you (Shakes hands with him)

LORD GORING My dear fellow, I'll tell you at once At the present moment, under the usual palm tree I mean in the conservatory

Enter MASON

MASON Lord Caversham

LORD GORING That admirable father of mine really makes a habit of turning up at the wrong moment It is very heartless of him very heartless indeed

Enter LORD CAVERSHAM MASON goes out

LORD CAVERSHAM Good morning, Lady Chiltern! Warmest congratulations to you, Chiltern on your brilliant speech last night I have just left the Prime Minister and you are to have the vacant seat in the Cabinet

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (with a look of joy and triumph) A seat in the Cabinet?

LORD CAVERSHAM Yes, here is the Prime Minister's letter (Hands letter)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (takes letter and reads it) A seat in the Cabinet!

LORD CAVERSHAM Certainly, and you well deserve it too You have got what we want so much in political life nowadays—high character high moral tone, high principles (To LORD GORING) Everything that you have not got sir and never will have

LORD GORING I don't like principles, father I prefer prejudices (SIR ROBERT CHILTERN is on the brink of accepting the Prime Minister's offer, when he sees his wife looking at him with her clear, candid eyes He then realizes that it is impossible)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I cannot accept this offer Lord Caversham I have made up my mind to decline it

LORD CAVERSHAM Decline it sir!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN My intention is to retire at once from public life

LORD CAVERSHAM (angrily) Decline a seat in the Cabinet and retire from public life? Never heard such damned nonsense in the whole course of my existence I beg your pardon Lady Chiltern Chiltern I beg your pardon (To LORD GORING) Don't grin like that sir

LORD GORING No father!

LORD CAVERSHAM Lady Chiltern you are a sensible woman, the most sensible woman in London the most sensible woman I know Will you kindly prevent your husband from making such a from talking such Will you kindly do that Lady Chiltern?

LADY CHILTERN I think my husband is right in his determination Lord Caversham I approve of it

LORD CAVERSHAM You approve of it? Good Heavens!

LADY CHILTERN (taking her husband's hand) I admire him for it I admire him immensely for it I have never admired him so much before He is finer than even I thought him (To SIR ROBERT CHILTERN) You will go and write your letter to the Prime Minister now won't you? Don't hesitate about it Robert

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (with a touch of bitterness) I suppose I had better write it at once Such offers are not repeated I will ask you to excuse me for a moment, Lord Caversham

LADY CHILTERN I may come with you, Robert may I not?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Yes Gertrude (LADY CHILTERN goes out with him)

LORD CAVERSHAM What is the matter with this family? Something wrong here eh? (*Tapping his forehead*) Idiocy? Hereditary I suppose Both of them, too Wife as well as husband Very sad Very sad indeed! And they are not an old family Can't understand it

LORD GORING It is not idiocy father I assure you

LORD CAVERSHAM What is it then sir?

LORD GORING (*after some hesitation*) Well it is what is called nowadays a high moral tone father That is all

LORD CAVERSHAM Hate these new fangled names Same thing as we used to call idiocy fifty years ago Shant stay in this house any longer

LORD GORING (*taking his arm*) Oh! just go in here for a moment, father Third palm tree to the left the usual palm tree

LORD CAVERSHAM What sir?

LORD GORING I beg your pardon father, I forgot The conservatory father the conservatory—there is some one there I want you to talk to

LORD CAVERSHAM What about sir?

LORD GORING About me father

LORD CAVERSHAM (*grimly*) Not a subject on which much eloquence is possible

LORD GORING No father but the lady is like me She doesn't much care for eloquence in others She thinks it a little loud (LORD CAVERSHAM goes into the conservatory LADY CHILTERN enters)

LORD GORING Lady Chiltern, why are you playing Mrs Cheveleys cards?

LADY CHILTERN (*startled*) I don't understand you

LORD GORING Mrs Cheveley made an attempt to ruin your husband Either to drive him from public life or to make him adopt a dishonorable position From the latter tragedy you saved him The former you are now thrusting on him Why should you do him the wrong Mrs Cheveley tried to do and failed?

LADY CHILTERN Lord Goring!

LORD GORING (*pulling himself together for a great effort and showing the philosophy that underlies the dandy*) Lady Chiltern allow me You wrote me a letter last night in which you said you trusted me and wanted my help Now is the moment when you really want my help now is the time when you have got to trust me to trust in my counsel and judgment You love Robert Do you want to kill his love for you? What sort of existence will he have if you rob him of the fruits of his ambition if you take him from the splendor of a great political career, if you close the doors of public life against him if you condemn him to sterile failure he who was made for triumph and success? Women are not meant to

judge us but to forgive us when we need forgiveness Pardon not punishment is their mission Why should you scourge him with rods for a sin done in his youth before he knew you, before he knew himself? A man's life is of more value than a woman's It has larger issues wider scope greater ambitions A woman's life revolves in curves of emotions It is upon lines of intellect that a man's life progresses Don't make any terrible mistake Lady Chiltern A woman who can keep a man's love and love him in return, has done all the world wants of women or should want of them

LADY CHILTERN (*troubled and hesitating*) But it is my husband himself who wishes to retire from public life He feels it is his duty It was he who first said so

LORD GORING Rather than lose your love Robert would do anything wreck his whole career as he is on the brink of doing now He is making for you a terrible sacrifice Take my advice Lady Chiltern and do not accept a sacrifice so great If you do you will live to repent it bitterly We men and women are not made to accept such sacrifices from each other We are not worthy of them Besides Robert has been punished enough

LADY CHILTERN We have both been punished I set him up too high

LORD GORING (*with deep feeling in his voice*) Do not for that reason set him down now too low If he has fallen from his altar do not thrust him into the mire Failure to Robert would be the very mire of shame Power is his passion He would lose everything even his power to feel love Your husband's life is at this moment in your hands your husband's love is in your hands Don't mar both for him

Enter SIR ROBERT CHILTERN

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Gertrude here is the draft of my letter Shall I read it to you?

LADY CHILTERN Let me see it (SIR ROBERT hands her the letter She reads it and then, with a gesture of passion tears it up)

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN What are you doing?

LADY CHILTERN A man's life is of more value than a woman's It has larger issues wider scope greater ambitions Our lives revolve in curves of emotions It is upon lines of intellect that a man's life progresses I have just learnt this and much else with it from Lord Goring And I will not spoil your life for you nor see you spoil it as a sacrifice to me, a useless sacrifice!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Gertrude! Gertrude!

LADY CHILTERN You can forget Men easily forget And I forgive That is how women help the world I see that now

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*deeply overcome by emotion embraces her*) My wife! my wife! (To LORD

GORING ) Arthur it seems that I am always to be in your debt

LORD GORING Oh, dear no Robert Your debt is to Lady Chiltern not to me!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN I owe you much And now tell me what you were going to ask me just now as Lord Caversham came in

LORD GORING Robert you are your sister's guardian, and I want your consent to my marriage with her That is all

LADY CHILTERN Oh, I am so glad! I am so glad (*Shakes hands with LORD GORING*)

LORD GORING Thank you Lady Chiltern

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*with a troubled look*) My sister to be your wife?

LORD GORING Yes

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*speaking with great firmness*) Arthur I am very sorry, but the thing is quite out of the question I have to think of Mabel's future happiness And I don't think her happiness would be safe in your hands And I cannot have her sacrificed!

LORD GORING Sacrificed!

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Yes utterly sacrificed Loveless marriages are horrible But there is one thing worse than an absolutely loveless marriage A marriage in which there is love, but on one side only, faith, but on one side only devotion, but on one side only, and in which of the two hearts one is sure to be broken

LORD GORING But I love Mabel No other woman has any place in my life

LADY CHILTERN Robert if they love each other, why should they not be married?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Arthur cannot bring Mabel the love that she deserves

LORD GORING What reason have you for saying that?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (*after a pause*) Do you really require me to tell you?

LORD GORING Certainly I do

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN As you choose When I called on you yesterday evening I found Mrs Cheveley concealed in your rooms It was between ten and eleven o'clock at night I do not wish to say anything more Your relations with Mrs Cheveley have as I said to you last night nothing whatsoever to do with me I know you were engaged to be married to her once The fascination she exercised over you then seems to have returned You spoke to me last night of her as a woman pure and stainless, a woman whom you respected and honored That may be so But I cannot give my sister's life into your hands It would be wrong of me It would be unjust, infamously unjust to her

LORD GORING I have nothing more to say

LADY CHILTERN Robert it was not Mrs Cheveley whom Lord Goring expected last night

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN Not Mrs Cheveley! Who was it then?

LORD GORING Lady Chiltern!

LADY CHILTERN It was your own wife Robert yesterday afternoon Lord Goring told me that if ever I was in trouble I could come to him for help as he was our oldest and best friend Later on, after that terrible scene in this room I wrote to him telling him that I trusted him that I had need of him, that I was coming to him for help and advice (*SIR ROBERT CHILTERN takes the letter out of his pocket*) Yes, that letter I didn't go to Lord Goring's after all I felt that it is from ourselves alone that help can come Pride made me think that Mrs Cheveley went She stole my letter and sent it anonymously to you this morning, that you should think Oh! Robert, I cannot tell you what she wished you to think

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN What! Had I fallen so low in your eyes that you thought that even for a moment I could have doubted your goodness? Gertrude Gertrude you are to me the white image of all good things and sin can never touch you Arthur you can go to Mabel and you have my best wishes! Oh! stop a moment There is no name at the beginning of this letter The brilliant Mrs Cheveley does not seem to have noticed that There should be a name

LADY CHILTERN Let me write yours It is you I trust and need You and none else

LORD GORING Well really Lady Chiltern I think I should have back my own letter

LADY CHILTERN (*smiling*) No, you shall have Mabel (*Takes the letter and writes her husband's name on it*)

LORD GORING Well I hope she hasn't changed her mind It's nearly twenty minutes since I saw her last

*Enter MABEL CHILTERN and LORD CAVERSHAM*

MABEL CHILTERN Lord Goring I think your father's conversation much more improving than yours I am only going to talk to Lord Caversham in the future and always under the usual palm tree

LORD GORING Darling! (*Kisses her*)

LORD CAVERSHAM (*considerably taken aback*) What does this mean sir? You don't mean to say that this charming clever young lady has been so foolish as to accept you?

LORD GORING Certainly father! And Chiltern's been wise enough to accept a seat in the Cabinet

LORD CAVERSHAM I am very glad to hear that, Chiltern I congratulate you, sir If the country doesn't go to the dogs or the Radicals, we shall have you Prime Minister, some day



## Enter MASON

MASON Luncheon is on the table my lady!  
(MASON goes out)

LADY CHILTERN You'll stop to luncheon, Lord Caversham won't you?

LORD CAVERSHAM With pleasure and I'll drive you down to Downing Street afterwards, Chiltern. You have a great future before you a great future. Wish I could say the same for you sir. (To LORD GORING) But your career will have to be entirely domestic.

LORD GORING Yes father, I prefer it domestic.

LORD CAVERSHAM And if you don't make this young lady an ideal husband, I'll cut you off with a shilling.

MABEL CHILTERN An ideal husband! Oh I don't think I should like that. It sounds like something in the next world.

LORD CAVERSHAM What do you want him to be then, dear?

MABEL CHILTERN He can be what he chooses. All I want is to be to be oh! a real wife to him.

LORD CAVERSHAM Upon my word there is a good deal of common sense in that. Lady Chiltern. (They all go out except SIR ROBERT CHILTERN. He sinks into a chair wrapt in thought. After a little time LADY CHILTERN returns to look for him.)

LADY CHILTERN (leaning over the back of the chair) Aren't you coming in Robert?

SIR ROBERT CHILTERN (taking her hand) Gentitude, is it love you feel for me or is it pity merely?

LADY CHILTERN (kisses him) It is love Robert. Love and only love. For both of us a new life is beginning.

## CURTAIN

## STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 What is the basic situation in the play? How is it revealed to us? What is the significance of the title?
- 2 What is the basic action of the play? How is it revealed to us?
- 3 How would you characterize the style and tone of the play? To which of the other two comedies are these more closely allied?
- 4 What are the attitudes taken by the various characters toward women? Toward the relations between the sexes marriage and love?
- 5 What are the motivations of Sir Robert Chiltern's character? What is his weakness of character? What is Wilde's attitude toward this weakness?
- 6 What is the nature of Viscount Goring's character? How does it differ from Sir Robert's? What is Wilde's attitude toward Lord Goring?

7 What is the nature of the role played by Lady Chiltern in the play? What is her weakness of character?

8 What kind of audience does a play of this sort demand? How does it differ from that of *She Stoops to Conquer*?

9 What view of life does Wilde express in the play? How is it revealed to us? How does it differ from the views expressed by Goldsmith and O'Neill?



## Ah, Wilderness!

Eugene O'Neill

O'Neill's reputation which seemed in decline even before his death has in recent years risen higher and higher until he now appears in his true light as the foremost American writer of tragedy. His last plays such as *The Iceman Cometh* reveal even more powerful probing than was shown in the earlier tragedies such as *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *Strange Interlude* in tensely brooding as they are. And today's more troubled audiences respond more sensitively to his bitter honesty than those of ten and twenty years ago. However we have chosen to reprint here a play which shows the opposite side of O'Neill warm affectionate almost—to be blunt and even vulgar about it—corny. *Ah Wilderness!* is the counterpoint to the doom-ridden world of O'Neill tragedy for here is an evocation of an America peaceful and safe in its values untroubled by Freudian nightmares or Marxian threats or Einsteinian paradoxes. Here there are no Oedipus complexes no monstrous mothers no weak fathers no domineering sisters no primal drives only the age-old story of a boy growing up from innocence to innocence—the innocence of pre-World War I America. When one considers how this same theme has been treated in say *The Way of All Flesh* or in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or even in *Of Human Bondage* one can only conclude that for once O'Neill was determined to go back to the age of innocence not to expose it but to love it and by loving it to hold up the ideal of familial love protection and security which he himself had demonstrated elsewhere was a grim delusion. Yet the gentle sympathy it elicits is genuine and touching not only for itself but for the lost illusion it must have been for O'Neill.

## TO GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

Who also once upon a time, in peg-top trousers went the pace that kills along the road to ruin

## CHARACTERS\*

NAT MILLER *owner of the EVENING GLOBE*  
 ESSIE *his wife*  
 ARTHUR  
 RICHARD  
 MILDRED  
 TOMMY  
 } *their children*  
 SID DAVIS, *Essie's brother*  
 LILY MILLER, *Nat's sister*  
 DAVID MC COMBER  
 MURIEL MC COMBER, *his daughter*  
 WINT SELBY *a classmate of Arthur's at Yale*  
 BELLE  
 NORAH  
 BARTENDER  
 SALESMAN

## SCENES

## ACT ONE

Sitting room of the Miller home in a large small-town in Connecticut—early morning July 4th 1906

## ACT TWO

Dining room of the Miller home—evening of the same day

## ACT THREE

SCENE ONE Back room of a bar in a small hotel—10 o'clock the same night

SCENE TWO Same as Act One—the sitting room of the Miller home—a little after 11 o'clock the same night

## ACT FOUR

SCENE ONE The Miller sitting-room again—about 1 o'clock the following afternoon

SCENE TWO A strip of beach along the harbor—about 9 o'clock that night

SCENE THREE Same as Scene One—the sitting room—about 10 o'clock the same night

## ACT ONE

SCENE—Sitting room of the Miller home in a large small town in Connecticut—about 7 30 in the morning of July 4th, 1906

*The room is fairly large homely looking and cheerful in the morning sunlight furnished with scrupulous medium-priced tastelessness of the period*

\* CAUTION See restrictions on use of this play as noted in our permission acknowledgments for Random House Inc

Beneath the two windows at left, front, a sofa with silk and satin cushions stands against the wall. At rear of sofa a bookcase with glass doors, filled with cheap sets extends along the remaining length of wall. In the rear wall left is a double doorway with sliding doors and portières leading into a dark windowless back parlor. At right of this doorway an other bookcase this time a small open one crammed with boys and girls books and the best selling novels of many past years—books the family really have read. To the right of this bookcase is the mate of the double doorway at its left with sliding doors and portières this one leading to a well lighted front parlor. In the right wall rear a screen door opens on a porch. Farther forward in this wall are two windows with a writing desk and a chair between them. At center is a big round table with a green shaded reading lamp, the cord of the lamp running up to one of five sockets in the chandelier above. Five chairs are grouped about the table—three rockers at left, right and right rear of it two armchairs at rear and left rear. A medium priced inoffensive rug covers most of the floor. The walls are papered white with a cheerful ugly blue design.

Voices are heard in a conversational tone from the dining room beyond the back parlor where the family are just finishing breakfast. Then MRS MILLER'S voice raised commandingly Tommy! Come back here and finish your milk! At the same moment TOMMY appears in the doorway from the back parlor—a chubby sun-burnt boy of eleven with dark eyes blond hair wetted and plastered down in a part and a shiny good natured face a rim of milk visible about his lips. Bursting with bottled up energy and a longing to get started on the Fourth he nevertheless has hesitated obediently at his mother's call.

TOMMY (calls back pleadingly) Aw I'm full, Ma. And I said excuse me and you said all right. (His FATHER'S voice is heard speaking to his mother. Then she calls All right Tommy and TOMMY asks eagerly) Can I go out now?

MOTHER'S VOICE (correctingly) May I!

TOMMY (fidgeting but obediently) May I Ma? 50

MOTHER'S VOICE Yes (TOMMY jumps for the screen door to the porch at right like a sprinter released by the starting shot)

FATHER'S VOICE (shouts after him) But you set off your crackers away from the house remember! (But TOMMY is already through the screen door which he leaves open behind him)

(A moment later the family appear from the back parlor coming from the dining room. First are MILDRED and ARTHUR. MILDRED is fifteen tall and slender with big irregular features resembling her father to the complete effacing of any pretense at prettiness. But her big gray eyes are beautiful she

has vivacity and a fetching smile and everyone thinks of her as an attractive girl. She is dressed in shirtwaist and skirt in the fashion of the period.

(ARTHUR the eldest of the Miller children who are still living home is nineteen. He is tall, heavy, barrel-chested and muscular, the type of football linesman of that period, with a square, stolid face, small blue eyes and thick sandy hair. His manner is solemnly collegiate. He is dressed in the latest college fashion of that day which has receded a bit from the extreme of preceding years, but still runs to padded shoulders and pants half pegged at the top and so small at their wide cuffed bottoms that they cannot be taken off with shoes on.)

MILDRED (as they appear—inquisitively) Where are you going today, Art?

ARTHUR (with superior dignity) That's my business. (He ostentatiously takes from his pocket a tobacco pouch with a big Y and class numerals stamped on it and a heavy bulldog briar pipe with silver Y and numerals and starts filling the pipe.)

MILDRED (teasingly) Bet I know just the same! Want me to tell you her initials? E R! (She laughs. ARTHUR, pleased by this insinuation at his lady-killing activities, yet finds it beneath his dignity to reply. He goes to the table, lights his pipe and picks up the local morning paper and slouches back into the arm chair at left rear of table, beginning to whistle. Oh Waltz Me Around Again, Willie, as he scans the headlines. MILDRED sits on the sofa at left, front.)

(Meanwhile their mother and their AUNT LILY, their father's sister, have appeared following them from the back parlor. MRS MILLER is around fifty, a short, stout woman with fading light-brown hair sprinkled with gray, who must have been decidedly pretty as a girl in a round-faced, cute, small-featured, wide-eyed fashion. She has big brown eyes, soft and maternal—a bustling mother of a family manner. She is dressed in shirtwaist and skirt.)

(LILY MILLER, her sister-in-law, is forty-two, tall, dark and thin. She conforms outwardly to the conventional type of old maid school teacher, even to wearing glasses. But behind the glasses her gray eyes are gentle and tired, and her whole atmosphere is one of shy kindness. Her voice presents the greatest contrast to her appearance—soft and full of sweetness. She also is dressed in a shirtwaist and skirt.)

MRS MILLER (as they appear) Getting milk down him is like— (Suddenly she is aware of the screen door standing half open.) Goodness, look at that door! He's left open! The house will be alive with flies! (Rushing out to shut it) I've told him again and again—and that's all the good it does! It's just a waste of breath! (She slams the door shut.)

LILY (smiling) Well, you can't expect a boy to remember to shut doors—on the Fourth of July. (She goes diffidently to the straight-backed chair

before the desk at right front, leaving the comfortable chairs to the others.)

MRS MILLER That's you all over, Lily—always making excuses for him. You'll have him spoiled to death in spite of me. (She sinks in rocker at right of table.) Phew! I'm hot, aren't you? This is going to be a scorcher. (She picks up a magazine from the table and begins to rock, fanning herself.)

(Meanwhile her husband and her brother have appeared from the back parlor, both smoking cigars.)

NAT MILLER is in his late fifties, a tall, dark, spare man, a little stoop-shouldered, more than a little bald, dressed with an awkward attempt at sober respectability imposed upon an innate heedlessness of clothes. His long face has large, irregular, undistinguished features, but he has fine, shrewd, humorous gray eyes.

(SID DAVIS, his brother-in-law, is forty-five, short and fat, bald-headed with the Puckish face of a Peck's Bad Boy who has never grown up. He is dressed in what had once been a very natty, loud light suit but is now a shapeless and faded nondescript in cut and color.)

SID (as they appear) Oh, I like the job first rate. Nat Waterbury's a nifty old town with the lid off when you get to know the ropes. I rang in a joke in one of my stories that tickled the folks there: pink Waterwagon—Waterbury—Waterloo!

MILLER (grinning) Darn good!

SID (pleased) I thought it was pretty fair myself. (Goes on a bit ruefully as if oppressed by a secret sorrow.) Yes, you can see life in Waterbury all right—that is, if you're looking for life in Waterbury!

MRS MILLER What's that about Waterbury, Sid?

SID I was saying it's all right in its way—but there's no place like home. (As if to punctuate this remark, there begins a series of bangs from just beyond the porch outside, as TOMMY inaugurates his celebration by setting off a package of firecrackers. The assembled family jump in their chairs.)

MRS MILLER That boy! (She rushes to the screen door and out on the porch, calling) Tommy! You mind what your Pa told you! You take your crackers out in the back yard, you hear me!

ARTHUR (frowning scornfully) Fresh kid! He did it on purpose to scare us.

MILLER (grinning through his annoyance) Darned youngster! He'll have the house afire before the days out.

SID (grins and sings)

Dunno what ter call 'im  
But he's mighty like a Rose—vel!

(They all laugh.)

LILY Sid, you crazy! (SID beams at her. MRS MILLER comes back from the porch, still fuming.)

MRS MILLER Well, I've made him go out back



is that boy? I thought he came in with us from breakfast

MILDRED I'll bet he's off somewhere writing a poem to Muriel McComber the silly! Or pretending to write one I think he just copies—

ARTHUR (*looking back toward the dining room*) He's still in the dining room reading a book (*Turning back—scornfully*) Gosh he's always reading now It's not my idea of having a good time in vacation

MILLER (*caustically*) He read his school books too, strange as that may seem to you That's why he came out top of his class I'm hoping before you leave New Haven they'll find time to teach you reading is a good habit

MRS MILLER (*sharply*) That reminds me Nat I've been meaning to speak to you about those awful books Richard is reading You've got to give him a good talking to— (*She gets up from her chair*) I'll go up and get them right now I found them where he'd hid them on the shelf in his wardrobe You just wait till you see what— (*She bustles off rear right through the front parlor*)

MILLER (*plainly not relishing whatever is coming—to SID grumbly*) Seems to me she might wait until the Fourth is over before bringing up— (*Then with a grin*) I know there's nothing to it any way When I think of the books I used to sneak off and read when I was a kid

SID Me, too I suppose Dick is deep in Nick Carter or Old Cap Collier

MILLER No, he passed that period long ago Poetry's his red meat nowadays I think—love poetry—and socialism too I suspect from some dire declarations he's made (*Then briskly*) Well might as well get him on the carpet (*He calls*) Richard (*No answer—louder*) Richard (*No answer—then in a bellow*) Richard!

ARTHUR (*shouting*) Hey, Dick, wake up! Pa's calling you

RICHARD'S VOICE (*from the dining room*) All right I'm coming

MILLER Darn him! When he gets his nose in a book the house could fall down and he'd never—

(*RICHARD appears in the doorway from the back parlor the book he has been reading in one hand a finger marking his place He looks a bit startled still reluctantly called back to earth from another world*)

(*He is going on seventeen just out of high school In appearance he is a perfect blend of father and mother so much so that each is convinced he is the image of the other He has his mother's light brown hair his father's gray eyes his features are neither large nor small he is of medium height neither fat nor thin One would not call him a handsome boy neither is he homely But he is definitely different*)

*from both of his parents too There is something of extreme sensitiveness added—a restless apprehensive defiant shy dreamy self-conscious intelligence about him In manner he is alternately plain simple boy and a posey actor solemnly playing a role He is dressed in prep school reflection of the college style of ARTHUR*)

RICHARD Did you want me Pa?

MILLER I'd hoped I'd made that plain Come and sit down a while (*He points to the rocking chair at the right of table near his*)

RICHARD (*coming forward—seizing on the opportunity to play up his preoccupation—with apologetic superiority*) I didn't hear you Pa I was off in another world (*MILDRED slyly shoves her foot out so that he trips over it almost falling She laughs gleefully So does ARTHUR*)

ARTHUR Good for you Mid! That'll wake him up!

RICHARD (*grins sheepishly—all boy now*) Darn you Mid! I'll show you! (*He pushes her back on the sofa and tickles her with his free hand still holding the book in the other She shrieks*)

ARTHUR Give it to her Dick!

MILLER That's enough now No more rough house You sit down here Richard (*RICHARD obediently takes the chair at right of table opposite his father*) What were you planning to do with your self today? Going out to the beach with Mildred?

RICHARD (*scornfully superior*) That silly skit party! I should say not!

MILDRED He's not coming because Muriel isn't I'll bet he's got a date with her somewhere

RICHARD (*flushing bashfully*) You shut up! (*Then to his father*) I thought I'd just stay home Pa—this morning anyway

MILLER Help Tommy set off firecrackers eh?

RICHARD (*drawing himself up—with dignity*) I should say not (*Then frowning portentously*) I don't believe in this silly celebrating the Fourth of July—all this lying talk about liberty—when there is no liberty!

MILLER (*a twinkle in his eye*) Hmm

RICHARD (*getting warmed up*) The land of the free and the home of the brave! Home of the slave is what they ought to call it—the wage slave ground under the heel of the capitalist class starving crying for bread for his children and all he gets is a stone! The Fourth of July is a stupid farce!

MILLER (*putting a hand to his mouth to conceal a grin*) Hmm There are mighty strong words You'd better not repeat such sentiments outside the bosom of the family or they'll have you in jail

SID And throw away the key

RICHARD (*darkly*) Let them put me in jail But how about the freedom of speech in the Constitution then? That must be a farce too (*Then he adds grimly*) No, you can celebrate your Fourth of July

I'll celebrate the day the people bring out the guillotine again and I see Pierpont Morgan being driven by in a tumbrel! (*His father and Sid are greatly amused* LILY is shocked but taking her cue from them smiles MILDRED stares at him in puzzled wonderment never having heard this particular line before Only ARTHUR betrays the outraged reaction of a patriot)

10 ARTHUR Aw say you fresh kid tie that bull out side! You ought to get a punch in the nose for talking that way on the Fourth!

MILLER (*solemnly*) Son, if I didn't know it was you talking I'd think we had Emma Goldman with us

ARTHUR Never mind Pa Wait till we get him down to Yale We'll take that out of him!

RICHARD (*with high scorn*) Oh Yale! You think there's nothing in the world besides Yale After all what is Yale?

20 ARTHUR You'll find out what!

SID (*provocatively*) Don't let them scare you Dick Give 'em hell!

LILY (*shocked*) Sid! You shouldn't swear before—

RICHARD What do you think I am Aunt Lily—a baby? I've heard worse than anything Uncle Sid says

MILDRED And said worse himself I bet!

30 MILLER (*with a comic air of resignation*) Well Richard I've always found I've had to listen to at least one stump speech every Fourth I only hope getting your extra strong one right after breakfast will let me off for the rest of the day (*They all laugh now taking this as a cue*)

RICHARD (*somberly*) That's right, laugh! After you the deluge you think! But look out! Supposing it comes before? Why shouldn't the workers of the world unite and rise? They have nothing to lose but their chains! (*He recites threateningly*) The days grow hot O Babylon! 'Tis cool beneath thy willow trees!

40 MILLER Hmm That's good But where's the connection exactly? Something from that book you're reading?

RICHARD (*superior*) No That's poetry This is prose

MILLER I've heard there was a difference between 'em What is the book?

RICHARD (*importantly*) Carlyle's French Revolution

50 MILLER Hmm So that's where you drove the tumbrel from and piled poor old Pierpont in it (*Then seriously*) Glad you're reading it Richard It's a darn fine book

RICHARD (*with unflattering astonishment*) What have you read it?

MILLER Well you see even a newspaper owner can't get out of reading a book every now and again

RICHARD (*abashed*) I—I didn't mean—I know

you— (*Then enthusiastically*) Say, isn't it a great book though—that part about Mirabeau—and about Marat and Robespierre—

60 MRS MILLER (*appears from the front parlor in a great state of flushed annoyance*) Never you mind Robespierre young man! You tell me this minute where you've hidden those books! They were on the shelf in your wardrobe and now you've gone and hid them somewhere else You go right up and bring them to your father! (*RICHARD for a second looks suddenly guilty and crushed Then he bristles defensively*)

MILLER (*after a quick understanding glance at him*) Never mind his getting them now We'll waste the whole morning over those darned books And anyway, he has a right to keep his library to himself—that is if they're not too— What books are they, Richard?

RICHARD (*self consciously*) Well—there's—

MRS MILLER I'll tell you if he won't—and you give him a good talking to (*Then after a glance at RICHARD mollifiedly*) Not that I blame Richard There must be some boy he knows who's trying to show off as advanced and wicked and he told him about—

RICHARD No! I read about them myself in the papers and in other books

MRS MILLER Well no matter how there they were on his shelf Two by that awful Oscar Wilde they put in jail for heaven knows what wickedness

ARTHUR (*suddenly—solemnly authoritative*) He committed bigamy (*Then as Sid smothers a burst of ribald laughter*) What are you laughing at? I guess I ought to know A fellow at college told me His father was in England when this Wilde was pinched—and he said he remembered once his mother asked his father about it and he told her he'd committed bigamy

MILLER (*hiding a smile behind his hand*) Well then that must be right Arthur

MRS MILLER I wouldn't put it past him nor anything else One book was called the Picture of something or other

RICHARD The Picture of Dorian Gray It's one of the greatest novels ever written!

MRS MILLER Looked to me like cheap trash And the second book was poetry The Ballad of I forget what

RICHARD The Ballad of Reading Gaol, one of the greatest poems ever written (*He pronounces it Reading Goal [as in goalpost]*)

MRS MILLER All about someone who murdered his wife and got hung as he richly deserved as far as I could make out And then there were two books by that Bernard Shaw—

RICHARD The greatest playwright alive today!

MRS MILLER To hear him tell it maybe! You

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know Nat, the one who wrote a play about—well never mind—that was so vile they wouldn't even let it play in New York!

MILLER Hmm I remember

MRS MILLER One was a book of his plays and the other had a long title I couldn't make head or tail of only it wasn't a play

RICHARD (*proudly*) The Quintessence of Ibsen-ism

MILDRED Phew! Good gracious, what a name! What does it mean, Dick? I'll bet he doesn't know

RICHARD (*outraged*) I do, too know! It's about Ibsen the greatest playwright since Shakespeare!

MRS MILLER Yes there was a book of plays by that Ibsen there too! And poems by Swin some thing—

RICHARD Poems and Ballads by Swinburne, Ma The greatest poet since Shelley! He tells the truth about real love!

MRS MILLER Love! Well all I can say is from reading here and there that if he wasn't flung in jail along with Wilde he should have been Some of the things I simply couldn't read they were so indecent—All about—well I can't tell you before Lily and Mildred

SID (*with a wink at RICHARD—jokingly*) Remember I'm next on that one, Dick I feel the need of a little poetical education

LILY (*scandalized but laughing*) Sid! Aren't you ashamed?

MRS MILLER This is no laughing matter And then there was Kipling—but I suppose he's not so bad And last there was a poem—a long one—the Rubay—What is it Richard?

RICHARD The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam That's the best of all!

MILLER Oh I've read that, Essie—got a copy down at the office

SID (*enthusiastically*) So have I It's a pippin!

LILY (*with shy excitement*) I—I've read it, too—at the library I like—some parts of it

MRS MILLER (*scandalized*) Why Lily!

MILLER Everybodys reading that now, Essie—and it don't seem to do them any harm There's fine things in it, seems to me—true things

MRS MILLER (*a bit bewildered and uncertain now*) Why, Nat I don't see how you—It looked terrible blasphemous—parts I read

SID Remember this one (*He quotes rhetorically*)

Oh Thou who didst with pitfall and gin beset the path I was to wander in—Now, I've always noticed how beset my path was with gin—in the past you understand! (*He casts a joking side glance at LILY*) The others laugh But LILY is in a melancholy dream and hasn't heard him)

MRS MILLER (*tartly but evidently suppressing*

*her usual smile where he is concerned*) You would pick out the ones with liquor in them!

LILY (*suddenly—with a sad pathos quotes awkwardly and shyly*) I like—because it's true

*The Moving Finger writes and having writ  
Moves on nor all your Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line  
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it*

MRS MILLER (*astonished, as are all the others*) Why Lily I never knew you to recite poetry before!

LILY (*immediately guilty and apologetic*) I—it just stuck in my memory somehow

RICHARD (*looking at her as if he had never seen her before*) Good for you Aunt Lily! (*Then enthusiastically*) But that isn't the best The best is

*A Book of Verses underneath the Bough  
A Jug of Wine A Loaf of Bread—and Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—*

ARTHUR (*who bored to death by all this poetry quoting has wandered over to the window at rear of desk right*) Hey! Look who's coming up the walk—Old Man McComber!

MILLER (*irritably*) Dave? Now what in thunder does that damned old—Sid I can see where we never are going to get to that picnic

MRS MILLER (*vexatiously*) Hell know we're in this early too No use lying (*Then appalled by another thought*) That Norah—she's that thick she never can answer the front door right unless I tell her each time Nat you've got to talk to Dave I'll have her show him in here Lily you run up the back stairs and get your things on I'll be up in a second Nat, you get rid of him the first second you can! Whatever can the old fool want—(*She and LILY hurry out through the back parlor*)

ARTHUR I'm going to beat it—just time to catch the eight twenty trolley

MILDRED I've got to catch that, too Wait till I get my hat Art! (*She rushes into the back parlor*)

ARTHUR (*shouts after her*) I can't wait You can catch up with me if you hurry (*He turns at the back-parlor door—with a grin*) McComber may be coming to see if your intentions toward his daughter are dishonorable Dick! You'd better beat it while your shoes are good! (*He disappears through the back-parlor door laughing*)

RICHARD (*a bit shaken but putting on a brave front*) Think I'm scared of him?

MILLER (*gazing at him—frowning*) Can't imagine what—But it's to complain about something, I know that I only wish I didn't have to be pleasant with the old buzzard—but he's about the most valuable advertiser I've got

SID (*sympathetically*) I know But tell him to go to hell anyway He needs that ad more than you



(The sound of the bell comes from the rear of the house off left from back parlor)

MILLER There he is You clear out Dick—but come right back as soon as he's gone, you hear? I'm not through with you yet

RICHARD Yes, Pa

MILLER You better clear out too Sid You know Dave doesn't approve jokes

10 SID And loves me like poison! Come on Dick well go out and help Tommy celebrate (He takes RICHARD'S arm and they also disappear through the back parlor door MILLER glances through the front parlor toward the front door then calls in a tone of strained heartiness)

MILLER Hello Dave Come right in here What good wind blows you around on this glorious Fourth?

(A flat brittle voice answers him Good morn-  
ing and a moment later DAVID MC COMBER appears  
20 in the doorway from the front parlor He is a thin dried up little man with a head too large for his body perched on a scrawny neck and a long solemn horse face with deep set little black eyes a blunt formless nose and a tiny slit of a mouth He is about the same age as MILLER but is entirely bald and looks ten years older He is dressed with a prim neatness in shiny old black clothes)

MILLER Here sit down and make yourself comfortable (Holding out the cigar box) Have a cigar?

30 MC COMBER (sitting down in the chair at the right of table—acidly) You're forgetting I never smoke

MILLER (forcing a laugh at himself) That's so So I was Well I'll smoke alone then (He bites off the end of the cigar viciously as if he wished it were MC COMBER'S head and sits down opposite him)

MC COMBER You asked me what brings me here so I'll come to the point at once I regret to say it's something disagreeable—disgraceful would be nearer the truth—and it concerns your son Richard!

40 MILLER (beginning to bristle—but calmly) Oh come now Dave I'm sure Richard hasn't—

MC COMBER (sharply) And I'm positive he has You're not accusing me of being a liar I hope

MILLER No one said anything about liar I only meant you're surely mistaken if you think—

MC COMBER I'm not mistaken I have proof of everything in his own handwriting!

MILLER (sharply) Let's get down to brass tacks Just what is it you're charging him with?

50 MC COMBER With being dissolute and blasphemous—with deliberately attempting to corrupt the morals of my young daughter Muriel

MILLER Then I'm afraid I will have to call you a liar Dave!

MC COMBER (without taking offense—in the same flat brittle voice) I thought you'd get around to that so I brought some of the proofs with me I've a lot more of 'em at home (He takes a wallet from his

inside coat pocket selects five or six slips of paper and holds them out to MILLER) These are good samples of the rest My wife discovered them in one of Muriel's bureau drawers hidden under the under-  
60 wear They're all in his handwriting you can't deny it Anyway Muriel's confessed to me he wrote them You read them and then say I'm a liar (MILLER has taken the slips and is reading them frowningly MC COMBER talks on) Evidently you've been too busy to take the right care about Richard's bringing up or what he's allowed to read—though I can't see why his mother failed in her duty But that's your misfortune and none of my business But Muriel is my  
70 business and I can't and I won't have her innocence exposed to the contamination of a young man whose mind judging from his choice of reading matter is as foul—

MILLER (making a tremendous effort to control his temper) Why you damned old fool! Can't you see Richard's only a fool kid who's just at the stage when he's out to rebel against all authority and so he grabs at everything radical to read and wants to  
80 pass it on to his elders and his girl and boy friends to show off what a young hellion he is! Why at heart you'd find Richard is just as innocent and as big a kid as Muriel is! (He pushes the slips of paper across the table contemptuously) This stuff doesn't mean anything to me—that is nothing of what you think it means If you believe this would corrupt Muriel then you must believe she's easily corrupted! But I'll bet you'd find she knows a lot more about life than you give her credit for—and can guess a stoik didn't bring her down your chimney!

90 MC COMBER Now you're insulting my daughter! I won't forget that

MILLER I'm not insulting her I think Muriel is a darn nice girl That's why I'm giving her credit for ordinary good sense I'd say the same about my own Mildred who's the same age

MC COMBER I know nothing about your Mildred except that she's known all over as a flit (Then more sharply) Well I knew you'd prove obstinate but I certainly never dreamed you'd have the im-  
100 pudence after reading those papers to claim your son was innocent of all wrongdoing!

MILLER And what did you dream I'd do?

MC COMBER Do what it's your plain duty to do as a citizen to protect other people's children! Take and give him a hiding he'd remember to the last day of his life! You'd ought to do it for his sake if you had any sense—unless you want him to end up in jail!

MILLER (his fists clenched leans across the table) Dave I've stood all I can stand from you! You get  
110 out! And get out quick, if you don't want a kick in the rear to help you!

MC COMBER (again in his flat brittle voice, slowly getting to his feet) You needn't lose your temper I'm

only demanding you do your duty by your own as I've already done by mine. I'm punishing Muriel. She's not to be allowed out of the house for a month and she's to be in bed every night by eight sharp. And yet she's blameless compared to that—

MILLER I said I'd had enough out of you, Dave! *(He makes a threatening movement)*

10 MCCOMBER You needn't lay hands on me. I'm going. But there's one thing more. *(He takes a letter from his wallet)* Here's a letter from Muriel for your son. *(Puts it on the table)* It makes clear I think, how she's come to think about him, now that her eyes have been opened. I hope he heeds what's inside—for his own good and yours—because if I ever catch him hanging about my place again I'll have him arrested! And don't think I'm not going to make you regret the insults you've heaped on me. I'm taking the advertisement for my store out of your paper—and it won't go in again. I tell you, not unless  
20 you apologize in writing and promise to punish—

MILLER I'll see you in hell first! As for your damned old ad, take it out and go to hell!

MCCOMBER That's plain bluff. You know how badly you need it. So do I. *(He starts stiffly for the door)*

30 MILLER He! He! Listen a minute! I'm just going to call your bluff and tell you that whether you want to reconsider your decision or not, I'm going to refuse to print your damned ad after tomorrow! Put that in your pipe and smoke it! Furthermore, I'll start a campaign to encourage outside capital to open a dry goods store in opposition to you that won't be the public swindle I can prove yours is!

MCCOMBER *(a bit shaken by this threat—but in the same flat tone)* I'll sue you for libel!

MILLER When I get through there won't be a person in town will buy a dishrag in your place!

40 MCCOMBER *(more shaken, his eyes shifting about furtively)* That's all bluff. You wouldn't dare—*(Then finally he says uncertainly)* Well, good day. *(And turns and goes out. NAT stands looking after him. Slowly the anger drains from his face and leaves him looking a bit sick and disgusted. SID appears from the back parlor. He is nursing a burn on his right hand, but his face is one broad grin of satisfaction.)*

50 SID I burned my hand with one of Tommy's damned firecrackers and came in to get some vase line. I was listening to the last of your sciap. Good for you, Nat! You sure gave him hell!

MILLER *(dully)* Much good it'll do. He knows it was all talk.

SID That's just what he don't know, Nat. The old skinflint has a guilty conscience.

MILLER Well, anyone who knows me knows I wouldn't use my paper for a dirty, spiteful trick like that—no matter what he did to me.

SID Yes, everyone knows you're an old sucker. Nat too decent for your own good. But McComber never saw you like this before. I tell you, you scared the pants off him. *(He chuckles)*

MILLER *(still dejectedly)* I don't know what made me let go like that. The hell of skunks like McComber is that after being with them ten minutes you become as big skunks as they are.

SID *(notices the slips of paper on the table)* What's this? Something he brought? *(He picks them up and starts to read)*

MILLER *(grimly)* Samples of the new freedom—from those books Essie found—that Richard's been passing on to Muriel to educate her. They're what started the rumpus. *(Then frowning)* I've got to do something about that young anarchist or he'll be getting me and himself in a peck of trouble. *(Then pathetically helpless)* But what can I do? Putting the curb on would make him worse. Then he'd have a harsh tyrant to defy. He'd love that, darn him!

SID *(has been reading the slips, a broad grin on his face—suddenly he whistles)* Phew! This is a warm lulu for fair! *(He recites with a joking intention)*

*My life is bitter with thy love, thine eyes  
Blind me, thy tresses burn me, thy sharp sighs  
Divide my flesh and spirit with soft sound—*

MILLER *(with a grim smile)* Hmm, I missed that one. That must be Mr. Swinburne's copy. I've never read him, but I've heard something like that was the matter with him.

SID Yes, it's labelled Swinburne—Anactoria. Whatever that is. But wait, watch and listen! The worst is yet to come! *(He recites with added comic intensity)*

*That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat  
Thy breasts like honey, that from face to feet  
Thy body were abolished and consumed  
And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed!*

MILLER *(An irrepressible boyish grin coming to his face)* Hell and hallelujah! Just picture old Dave digesting that for the first time! Gosh, I'd give a lot to have seen his face! *(Then a trace of shocked reproof showing in his voice)* But it's no joking matter. That stuff is warm—too damned warm, if you ask me! I don't like this a damned bit. Sid, that's no kind of thing to be sending a decent girl. *(More worriedly)* I thought he was really stuck on her—as one gets stuck on a decent girl at his age—all moon shine and holding hands and a kiss now and again. But this looks— I wonder if he is hanging around her to see what he can get? *(Angrily)* By God, if that's true, he deserves that licking McComber says it's my duty to give him! I've got to draw the line somewhere!

SID Yes it won't do to have him getting any decent girl in trouble

MILLER The only thing I can do is put it up to him straight (*With pride*) Richard'll stand up to his guns no matter what I've never known him to lie to me

SID (*at a noise from the back parlor looks that way—in a whisper*) Then now's your chance I'll beat it and leave you alone—see if the women folks are ready upstairs We ought to get started soon—it were ever going to make that picnic (*He is half way to the entrance to the front parlor as RICHARD enters from the back parlor very evidently nervous about MC COMBER's call*)

RICHARD (*adopting a forced innocent tone*) How's your hand, Uncle Sid?

SID All right Dick thanks—only hurts a little (*He disappears* MILLER watches his son frowningly RICHARD gives him a quick side glance and grows more guiltily self-conscious)

RICHARD (*forcing a snicker*) Gee, Pa Uncle Sid's a bigger kid than Tommy is He was throwing fire crackers in the air and catching them on the back of his hand and throwing 'em off again just before they went off—and one came and he wasn't quick enough and it went off almost on top of—

MILLER Never mind that I've got something else to talk to you about besides firecrackers

RICHARD (*apprehensively*) What Pa?

MILLER (*suddenly puts both hands on his shoulders—quietly*) Look here Son I'm going to ask you a question and I want an honest answer I warn you beforehand if the answer is yes I'm going to punish you and punish you hard because you'll have done something no boy of mine ought to do But you've never lied to me before I know and I don't believe even to save yourself punishment you'd lie to me now would you?

RICHARD (*impressed—with dignity*) I won't lie Pa

MILLER Have you been trying to have something to do with Muriel—something you shouldn't—you know what I mean

RICHARD (*stares at him for a moment as if he couldn't comprehend—then as he does a look of shocked indignation comes over his face*) No! What do you think I am, Pa? I never would! She's not that kind! Why I—I love her! I'm going to marry her—after I get out of college! She's said she would! We're engaged!

MILLER (*with great relief*) All right That's all I wanted to know We won't talk any more about it (*He gives him an approving pat on the back*)

RICHARD I don't see how you could think—Did that old idiot McComber say that about me?

MILLER (*joking now*) Shouldn't call your future father-in-law names should you? Tain't respectful

(*Then after a glance at RICHARD's indignant face—points to the slips of paper on the table*) Well, you can't exactly blame old Dave, can you when you read through that literature you wished on his innocent daughter?

RICHARD (*sees the slips for the first time and is overcome by embarrassment which he immediately tries to cover up with a superior carelessness*) Oh so that's why He found those did he? I told her to be careful—Well it'll do him good to read the truth about life for once and get rid of his old-fogy ideas

MILLER I'm afraid I've got to agree with him though that they're hardly fit reading for a young girl (*Then with subtle flattery*) They're all well enough in their way for you who're a man but—Think it over and see if you don't agree with me

RICHARD (*embarrassedly*) Aw I only did it because I liked them—and I wanted her to face life as it is She's so darned afraid of life—afraid of her Old Man—afraid of people saying this or that about her—afraid of being in love—afraid of everything She's even afraid to let me kiss her I thought maybe, reading those things—they're beautiful aint they Pa?—I thought they would give her the spunk to lead her own life and not be—always thinking of being afraid

MILLER I see Well I'm afraid she's still afraid (*He takes the letter from the table*) Here's a letter from her he said to give you (*RICHARD takes the letter from him uncertainly his expression changing to one of apprehension* MILLER adds with a kindly smile) You better be prepared for a bit of a blow But never mind There's lots of other fish in the sea (*RICHARD is not listening to him but staring at the letter with a sort of fascinated dread* MILLER looks into his son's face a second then turns away troubled and embarrassed) Darn it! I better go upstairs and get rigged out or I never will get to that picnic (*He moves awkwardly and self-consciously off through the front parlor* RICHARD continues to stare at the letter for a moment—then girds up his courage and tears it open and begins to read swiftly As he reads his face grows more and more wounded and tragic until at the end his mouth draws down at the corners as if he were about to break into tears With an effort he forces them back and his face grows flushed with humiliation and wounded anger)

RICHARD (*blurts out to himself*) The little coward! I hate her! She can't treat me like that! I'll show her! (*At the sound of voices from the front parlor he quickly shoves the letter into the inside pocket of his coat and does his best to appear calm and in different even attempting to whistle* Waiting at the Church But the whistle peters out miserably as his mother LILY and SID enter from the front parlor They are dressed in all the elaborate paraphernalia

of motoring at that period—linen dusters veils goggles SID in a snappy cap )

MRS MILLER Well we're about ready to start at last thank goodness! Let's hope no more callers are on the way What did that McComber want Richard do you know? Sid couldn't tell us

RICHARD You can search me Ask Pa

MRS MILLER (*immediately sensing something down in his manner—going to him worriedly*) Why whatever's the matter with you Richard? You sound as if you'd lost your last friend! What is it?

RICHARD (*desperately*) I—I don't feel so well—my stomach's sick

MRS MILLER (*immediately all sympathy—smoothing his hair back from his forehead*) You poor boy! What a shame—on the Fourth too of all days! (*Turning to the others*) Maybe I better stay home with him if he's sick

LILY Yes I'll stay too

RICHARD (*more desperately*) No! You go Mr! I'm not really sick I'll be all right You go I want to be alone! (*Then as a louder bang comes from in back as TOMMY sets off a cannon cracker he jumps to his feet*) Darn Tommy and his darned firecrackers! You can't get any peace in this house with that darned kid around! Darn the Fourth of July anyway! I wish we still belonged to England! (*He strides off in an indignant fury of misery through the front parlor*)

MRS MILLER (*stares after him worriedly—then sighs philosophically*) Well I guess he can't be so very sick—after that (*She shakes her head*) He's a queer boy Sometimes I can't make head or tail of him

MILLER (*calls from the front door beyond the back parlor*) Come along folks Let's get started

SID We're coming Nat (*He and the two women move off through the front parlor*)

CURTAIN

## ACT TWO

SCENE—Dining room of the MILLER home—a little after 6 o'clock in the evening of the same day

The room is much too small for the medium-priced formidable dining room set especially now when all the leaves of the table are in At left toward rear is a double doorway with sliding doors and portieres leading into the back parlor In the rear wall left is the door to the pantry At the right of door is the china closet with its display of the family cut glass and fancy china In the right wall are two windows looking out on a side lawn In front of the windows is a heavy ugly sideboard with three pieces of old silver on its top In the left wall,

extreme front is a screen door opening on a side porch A dark rug covers most of the floor The table with a chair at each end left and right three chairs on the far side facing front and two on the near side their backs to front takes up most of the available space The walls are papered in a somber brown and dark-red design

MRS MILLER is supervising and helping the Second Girl NORAH in the setting of the table NORAH is a clumsy heavy handed heavy footed long jawed beamingly good natured young Irish girl—a greenhorn

MRS MILLER I really think you better put on the lights Norah It's getting so cloudy out, and this pesky room is so dark, anyway

NORAH Yes Mum (*She stretches awkwardly over the table to reach the chandelier that is suspended from the middle of the ceiling and manages to turn one light on—scornfully*) Arrah the contraption!

MRS MILLER (*worriedly*) Careful!

NORAH Careful as can be Mum (*But in moving around to reach the next bulb she jars heavily against the table*)

MRS MILLER There! I knew it! I do wish you'd watch—!

NORAH (*a flustered appeal in her voice*) Arrah what have I done wrong now?

MRS MILLER (*draws a deep breath—then sighs helplessly*) Oh nothing Never mind the rest of the lights You might as well go out in the kitchen and wait until I ring

NORAH (*relieved and cheerful again*) Yes Mum (*She starts for the pantry*)

MRS MILLER But there's one thing— (*NORAH turns apprehensively*) No two things—things I've told you over and over but you always forget Don't pass the plates on the wrong side at dinner tonight and do be careful not to let that pantry door slam behind you Now you will try to remember, won't you?

NORAH Yes Mum (*She goes into the pantry and shuts the door behind her with exaggerated care as MRS MILLER watches her apprehensively MRS MILLER sighs and reaches up with difficulty and turns on another of the four lights in the chandelier As she is doing so LILY enters from the back parlor*)

LILY Here let me do that Essie I'm taller You'll only strain yourself (*She quickly lights the other two bulbs*)

MRS MILLER (*gratefully*) Thank you, Lily It's a stretch for me I'm getting so fat

LILY But where's Norah? Why didn't she—?

MRS MILLER (*exasperatedly*) Oh that girl! Don't talk about her! She'll be the death of me! She's that thick you honestly wouldn't believe it possible

LILY (*smiling*) Why what did she do now?

MRS MILLER Oh nothing She means all right

LILY Anything else I can do Essie?

MRS MILLER Well she's got the table all wrong We'll have to reset it But you're always helping me It isn't fair to ask you—in your vacation You need your rest after teaching a pack of wild Indians of kids all year

LILY (*beginning to help with the table*) You know I love to help It makes me feel I'm some use in this house instead of just sponging—

MRS MILLER (*indignantly*) Sponging! You pay don't you?

LILY Almost nothing And you and Nat only take that little to make me feel better about living with you (*Forcing a smile*) I don't see how you stand me—having a cranky old maid around all the time

MRS MILLER What nonsense you talk! As if Nat and I weren't only too tickled to death to have you! Lily Miller I've no patience with you when you go on like that We've been over this a thousand times before and still you go on! Crazy that's what it is! (*She changes the subject abruptly*) What times is it getting to be?

LILY (*looking at her watch*) Quarter past six

MRS MILLER I do hope those men folks aren't going to be late for dinner (*She sighs*) But I suppose with that darned Sachem Club picnic it's more likely than not (*Lily looks worried and sighs* MRS MILLER *gives her a quick side glance*) I see you've got your new dress on

LILY (*embarrassedly*) Yes I thought—if Sid's taking me to the fireworks—I ought to spruce up a little

MRS MILLER (*looking away*) Hmm (*A pause—then she says with an effort to be casual*) You mustn't mind if Sid comes home feeling a bit—gay I expect Nat to—and we'll have to listen to all those old stories of his about when he was a boy You know what those picnics are and Sid'd be running into all his old friends

LILY (*agitatedly*) I don't think he will—this time—not after his promise

MRS MILLER (*avoiding looking at her*) I know But men are weak (*Then quickly*) That was a good notion of Nat's getting Sid the job on the Waterbury Standard All he ever needed was to get away from the rut he was in here He's the kind that's the victim of his friends He's easily led—but there's no real harm in him you know that (*Lily keeps silent her eyes downcast* MRS MILLER *goes on meaningly*) He's making good money in Waterbury, too—thirty-five a week He's in a better position to get married than he ever was

LILY (*stiffly*) Well I hope he finds a woman who's willing—though after he's through with his betting on horse races and dice and playing Kelly pool

there won't be much left for a wife—even if there was nothing else he spent his money on

MRS MILLER Oh he'd give up all that—for the right woman (*Suddenly she comes directly to the point*) Lily why don't you change your mind and marry Sid and reform him? You love him and always have—

LILY (*stiffly*) I can't love a man who drinks

MRS MILLER You can't fool me I know darned well you love him And he loves you and always has

LILY Never enough to stop drinking for (*Cutting off MRS MILLER'S reply*) No it's no good in your talking Essie We've been over this a thousand times before and I'll always feel the same as long as Sid's the same If he gave me proof he'd—but even then I don't believe I could It's sixteen years since I broke off our engagement but what made me break it off is as clear to me today as it was then It was what he'd be liable to do now to anyone who married him—his taking up with bad women

MRS MILLER (*protests half heartedly*) But he's always sworn he got raked into that party and never had anything to do with those harlots

LILY Well I don't believe him—didn't then and don't now I do believe he didn't deliberately plan to but—Oh it's no good talking Essie What's done is done But you know how much I like Sid—in spite of everything I know he was just born to be what he is—irresponsible never meaning to harm but harming in spite of himself But don't talk to me about marrying him—because I never could

MRS MILLER (*angrily*) He's a dumb fool—a stupid dumb fool that's what he is!

LILY (*quietly*) No He's just Sid

MRS MILLER It's a shame for you—a measly shame—you that would have made such a wonderful wife for any man—that ought to have your own home and children!

LILY (*winces but puts her arm around her affectionately—gently*) Now don't you go feeling sorry for me I won't have that Here I am thanks to your and Nat's kindness with the best home in the world and as for the children I feel the same love for yours as if they were mine and I didn't have the pain of bearing them And then there are all the boys and girls I teach every year I like to feel I'm a sort of second mother to them and helping them to grow up to be good men and women So I don't feel such a useless old maid after all

MRS MILLER (*kisses her impulsively—her voice husky*) You're a good woman Lily—too good for the rest of us (*She turns away wiping a tear furiously—then abruptly changing the subject*) Good gracious if I'm not forgetting one of the most important things! I've got to warn that Tommy against giving me away to Nat about the fish He knows

because I had to send him to market for it and he's liable to burst out laughing—

LILY Laughing about what?

MRS MILLER (*guiltily*) Well, I've never told you because it seemed sort of a sneaking trick but you know how Nat carries on about not being able to eat bluefish

LILY I know he says there's a certain oil in it that poisons him

10 MRS MILLER (*chuckling*) Poisons him nothing! He's been eating bluefish for years—only I tell him each time it's weakfish. We're having it tonight—and I've got to warn that young imp to keep his face straight

LILY (*laughing*) Aren't you ashamed, Essie!

MRS MILLER Not much. I'm not! I like bluefish! (*She laughs*) Where is Tommy? In the sitting room?

LILY No, Richard's there alone. I think Tommy's out on the piazza with Mildred. (MRS MILLER bustles out through the back parlor. As soon as she is gone the smile fades from LILY's lips. Her face grows sad and she again glances nervously at her watch. RICHARD appears from the back parlor moving in an aimless way. His face wears a set expression of bitter gloom; he exudes tragedy. For RICHARD after his first outburst of grief and humiliation has begun to take a masochistic satisfaction in his great sorrow especially in the concern which it arouses in the family circle. On seeing his aunt he gives her a dark look and turns and is about to stalk back toward the sitting room when she speaks to him pityingly.)  
30 Feel any better, Richard?

RICHARD (*somberly*) I'm all right, Aunt Lily. You mustn't worry about me.

LILY (*going to him*) But I do worry about you. I hate to see you so upset.

RICHARD It doesn't matter. Nothing matters.

LILY (*puts her arm around him sympathetically*) You really mustn't let yourself take it so seriously.  
40 You know something happens and things like that come up and we think there's no hope—

RICHARD Things like what come up?

LILY What's happened between you and Muriel?

RICHARD (*with disdain*) Oh, her! I wasn't even thinking about her. I was thinking about life.

LILY But then—if we really *really* love—why then something else is bound to happen soon that changes everything again and it's all as it was before the misunderstanding and everything works out all right in the end. That's the way it is with life.  
50

RICHARD (*with a tragic sneer*) Life! Life is a joke! And everything comes out all wrong in the end!

LILY (*a little shocked*) You mustn't talk that way. But I know you don't mean it.

RICHARD I do too mean it! You can have your silly optimism if you like, Aunt Lily. But don't ask me to be so blind. I'm a pessimist! (*Then with an*

*air of cruel cynicism*) As for Muriel, that's all dead and past. I was only kidding her anyway just to have a little fun and she took it seriously like a fool. (*He forces a cruel smile to his lips*) You know what they say about women and trolley cars. Aunt Lily, there's always another one along in a minute.

LILY (*really shocked this time*) I don't like you when you say such horrible, cynical things. It isn't nice.

RICHARD Nice! That's all you women think of! I'm proud to be a cynic. It's the only thing you can be when you really face life. I suppose you think I ought to be heartbroken about Muriel—a little coward that's afraid to say her soul's her own and keeps tied to her father's apron strings! Well, not for mine! There's plenty of other fish in the sea! (*As he is finishing his mother comes back through the back parlor*)

MRS MILLER Why hello, you here, Richard? Getting hungry, I suppose?

RICHARD (*indignantly*) I'm not hungry a bit! That's all you think of, Ma—food!

MRS MILLER Well, I must say I've never noticed you to hang back at meal times. (*To LILY*) What's that he was saying about fish in the sea?  
80

LILY (*smiling*) He says he's through with Muriel now.

MRS MILLER (*tartly—giving her son a rebuking look*) She's through with him, he means! The idea of your sending a nice girl like her things out of those indecent books! (*Deeply offended*, RICHARD disdains to reply but stalks woundedly to the screen door at left front and puts a hand on the knob.)  
90 Where are you going?

RICHARD (*quotes from Candida in a hollow voice*) Out then into the night with me! (*He stalks out slamming the door behind him*.)

MRS MILLER (*calls*) Well, don't you go far, cause dinner'll be ready in a minute and I'm not coming running after you! (*She turns to LILY with a chuckle*) Goodness, that boy! He ought to be on the stage! (*She mimics*) Out—into the night—and it isn't even dark yet! He got that out of one of those books, I suppose. Do you know I'm actually grateful to old Dave McComber for putting an end to his nonsense with Muriel. I never did approve of Richard getting so interested in girls. He's not old enough for such silliness. Why seems to me it was only yesterday he was still a baby. (*She sighs—then matters of factly*) Well, nothing to do now till those men turn up. No use standing here like gawks. We might as well go in the sitting room and be comfortable.

LILY (*the nervous worried note in her voice again*) Yes, we might as well. (*They go out through the back parlor. They have no sooner disappeared than the screen door is opened cautiously and RICHARD comes back in the room*.)  
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RICHARD (*stands inside the door looking after them—quotes bitterly*) They do not know the secret in the poet's heart (*He comes nearer the table and surveys it especially the cut glass dish containing olives with contempt and mutters disdainfully*) Food! (*But the dish of olives seems to fascinate him and presently he has approached nearer and stealthily lifts a couple and crams them into his mouth. He is just reaching out for more when the pantry door is opened slightly and NORAH peers in*)

NORAH Mister Dick you thief lave them olives alone or the missus'll be swearing it was me at them!

RICHARD (*draws back his hand as if he had been stung—too flustered to be anything but guilty boy for a second*) I—I wasn't eating—

NORAH Oho no of course not devil fear you you was only feeling their pulse! (*Then warningly*) Mind what I'm saying now or I'll have to tell on you to protect me good name! (*She draws back into the pantry closing the door. RICHARD stands, a prey to feelings of bitterest humiliation and seething revolt against everyone and everything. A low whistle comes from just outside the porch door. He starts. Then a masculine voice calls. Hey, Dick. He goes over to the screen door grumpily—then as he recognizes the owner of the voice his own as he answers becomes respectful and admiring*)

RICHARD Oh hello, Wint. Come on in (*He opens the door and WINT SELBY enters and stands just inside the door. SELBY is nineteen a classmate of ARTHUR at Yale. He's a typical good looking college boy of the period not the athletic but the hell raising sport type. He is tall blond dressed in extreme collegiate cut*)

WINT (*as he enters—warningly in a low tone*) Keep it quiet Kid. I don't want the folks to know I'm here. Tell Art I want to see him a second—on the QT.

RICHARD Can't. He's up at the Rands—won't be home before ten anyway.

WINT (*irritably*) Damn. I thought he'd be here for dinner (*More irritably*) Hell that gums the works for fair!

RICHARD (*ingratiatingly*) What is it Wint? Can't I help?

WINT (*gives him an appraising glance*) I might tell you if you can keep your face shut.

RICHARD I can.

WINT Well I ran into a couple of swift babies from New Haven this after and I dated them up for tonight thinking I could catch Art. But now it's too late to get anyone else and I'll have to pass it up. I'm newly broke and I can't afford to blow them both to drunks.

RICHARD (*with shy eagerness*) I've got eleven dollars saved up. I could loan you some.

WINT (*surveys him appreciatively*) Say, you're a

good sport (*Then shaking his head*) Nix Kid, I don't want to borrow your money (*Then getting an idea*) But say have you got anything on for tonight?

RICHARD No.

WINT Want to come along with me? (*Then quickly*) I'm not trying to lead you astray understand. But it'll be a help if you would just sit around with Belle and feed her a few drinks while I'm off with Edith (*He winks*) See what I mean? You don't have to do anything not even take a glass of beer—unless you want to.

RICHARD (*boastfully*) Aw what do you think I am—a rube?

WINT You mean you're game for anything that's doing?

RICHARD Sure I am!

WINT Ever been out with any gals—I mean real swift ones that there's something doing with not these dead Janes around here?

RICHARD (*lies boldly*) Aw what do you think? Sure I have!

WINT Ever drink anything besides sodas?

RICHARD Sure. Lots of times. Beer and sloe gin fizz and—Manhattans.

WINT (*impressed*) Hell you know more than I thought (*Then considering*) Can you fix it so your folks won't get wise? I don't want your old man coming after me. You can get back by half past ten or eleven though all right. Think you can cook up some lie to cover that? (*As RICHARD hesitates—encouraging him*) Ought to be easy—on the Fourth.

RICHARD Sure. Don't worry about that.

WINT But you've got to keep your face closed about this you hear?—to Art and everybody else. I tell you straight. I wouldn't ask you to come if I wasn't in a hole—and if I didn't know you were coming down to Yale next year and didn't think you're giving me the straight goods about having been around before. I don't want to lead you astray.

RICHARD (*scornfully*) Aw I told you that was silly.

WINT Well you be at the Pleasant Beach House at half-past nine then. Come in the back room. And don't forget to grab some clothes to take the booze off your breath.

RICHARD Aw, I know what to do.

WINT See you later then (*He starts out and is just about to close the door when he thinks of something*) And say I'll say you're a Harvard freshman and you back me up. They don't know a damn thing about Harvard. I don't want them thinking I'm travelling around with any high school kid.

RICHARD Sue. That's easy.

WINT So long then. You better beat it right after your dinner while you've got a chance and hang around until it's time. Watch your step Kid.

RICHARD So long (*The door closes behind WINT*)

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RICHARD *stands for a moment a look of bitter defiant rebellion coming over his face and mutters to himself*) I'll show her she can't treat me the way she's done! I'll show them all! *(Then the front door is heard slamming and a moment later TOMMY rushes in from the back parlor)*

TOMMY Where's Ma?

RICHARD *(surlily)* In the sitting room. Where did you think Bonehead?

10 TOMMY Pa and Uncle Sid are coming. Mid and I saw them from the front piazza. Gee, I'm glad I'm awful hungry, ain't you? *(He rushes out through the back parlor calling)* Ma! They're coming! Let's have dinner quick! *(A moment later MRS. MILLER appears from the back parlor accompanied by TOMMY who keeps insisting urgently)* Gee, but I'm awful hungry, Ma!

MRS. MILLER I know. You always are. You've got a tapeworm, that's what I think.

20 TOMMY Have we got lobsters, Ma? Gee, I love lobsters.

MRS. MILLER Yes, we've got lobsters. And fish. You remember what I told you about that fish *(He snickers)*. Now do be quiet, Tommy! *(Then with a teasing smile at RICHARD)* Well, I'm glad to see you've got back out of the night. Richard *(He scowls and turns his back on her)*. LILY *appears through the back parlor nervous and apprehensive. As she does so from the front yard SID's voice is heard singing* Poo! John! MRS. MILLER *shakes her head forebodingly—but so great is the comic spell for her even in her brother's voice a humorous smile hovers at the corners of her lips*) Mmm! Mmm! Lily, I'm afraid—

30 LILY *(bitterly)* Yes, I might have known. *(MILDRED runs in through the back parlor. She is laughing to herself a bit shamefacedly. She rushes to her mother.)*

40 MILDRED Ma, Uncle Sid's— *(She whispers in her ear.)*

MRS. MILLER Never mind! You shouldn't notice such things—at your age! And don't you encourage him by laughing at his foolishness, you hear!

TOMMY You needn't whisper, Mid. Think I don't know? Uncle Sid's soused again.

MRS. MILLER *(shakes him by the arm indignantly)* You be quiet! Did I ever! You're getting too smart! *(Gives him a push)* Go to your place and sit right down and not another word out of you!

50 TOMMY *(aggrieved—rubbing his arm as he goes to his place)* Aw, Ma!

MRS. MILLER And you sit down, Richard and Mildred. You better too, Lily. We'll get him right in here and get some food in him. He'll be all right then. *(RICHARD preserving the pose of the bitter disillusioned pessimist sits down in his place in the chair at right of the two whose backs face front)*

MILDRED *takes the other chair facing back at his left. TOMMY has already slid into the end chair at right of those at the rear of table facing front. LILY sits in the one of those at left by the head of the table leaving the middle one [SID's] vacant. While they are doing this the front screen door is heard slamming and NAT's and SID's laughing voices raised as they come in and for a moment after then suddenly cautiously lowered. MRS. MILLER goes to the entrance to the back parlor and calls peremptorily)* You come right in here! Don't stop to wash up or anything. Dinner's coming right on the table.

MILLER'S VOICE *(jovially)* All right, Essie. Here we are! Here we are! 70

MRS. MILLER *(goes to pantry door, opens it and calls)* All right, Norah. You can bring in the soup. *(She comes back to the back parlor entrance just as MILLER enters. He isn't drunk by any means. He is just mellow and benignly ripened. His face is one large smiling happy beam of utter appreciation of life. All's right with the world so satisfyingly right that he becomes sentimentally moved even to think of it.)* 80

MILLER Here we are, Essie! Right on the dot! Here we are! *(He pulls her to him and gives her a smacking kiss on the ear as she jerks her head away. MILDRED and TOMMY giggle. RICHARD holds rigidly aloof and disdainful, his brooding gaze fixed on his plate. LILY forces a smile.)*

MRS. MILLER *(pulling away—embarrassedly at most blushing)* Don't you, Crazy! *(Then recovering herself—tartly)* So I see you're here! And if I didn't, you've told me four times already! 90

MILLER *(beamingly)* Now, Essie, don't be critical. Don't be carpingly critical. Good news can stand repeating, can't it? Course it can! *(He slaps her jovially on her fat buttocks. TOMMY and MILDRED roar with glee. And NORAH who has just entered from the pantry with a huge tureen of soup in her hands almost drops it as she explodes in a merry guffaw.)*

MRS. MILLER *(scandalized)* Nat! Aint you ashamed! 100

MILLER Couldn't resist it! Just simply couldn't resist it! *(NORAH still standing with the soup tureen held out stiffly in front of her again guffaws.)*

MRS. MILLER *(turns on her with outraged indignation)* Norah! Bring that soup here this minute! *(She stalks with stiff dignity toward her place at the foot of the table right.)*

NORAH *(guiltily)* Yes, Mum. *(She brings the soup around the head of the table passing MILLER.)*

MILLER *(jovially)* Why hello, Norah! 110

MRS. MILLER Nat! *(She sits down stiffly at the foot of the table.)*

NORAH *(rebuking him familiarly)* Ah! Ah! now

don't then There's lots of lobster coming and you can fill up on that (RICHARD suddenly bursts out laughing again)

MILLER (turns to him caustically) You seem in a merry mood Richard I thought you were the original of the Heart Bowed Down today

SID (with mock condolence) Never mind Dick Let them—scoff! What can they understand about girls whose hair sizzchels whose lips are fireworks whose eyes are red hot sparks—

MILDRED (laughing) Is that what he wrote to Muriel? (Turning to her brother) You silly goat you!

RICHARD (surlily) Aw shut up Mid What do I care about her? I'll show all of you how much I care!

MRS MILLER Pass your plates as soon as you're through everybody I've rung for the lobster And that's all You don't get any dessert or tea after lobster you know (NORAH appears bearing a platter of cold boiled lobsters which she sets before MILLER and disappears)

TOMMY Gee I love lobster! (MILLER puts one on each plate and they are passed around and everyone starts in pulling the cracked shells apart)

MILLER (feeling more cheerful after a couple of mouthfuls—determining to give the conversation another turn says to his daughter) Have a good time at the beach Mildred?

MILDRED Oh fine Pa, thanks The water was wonderful and warm

MILLER Swim far?

MILDRED Yes for me But that isn't so awful far

MILLER Well you ought to be a good swimmer if you take after me I used to be a regular water rat when I was a boy I'll have to go down to the beach with you one of these days—though I'd be rusty, not having been in in all these years (The reminiscient look comes into his eyes of one about to embark on an oft told tale of childhood adventure) You know speaking of swimming I never go down to that beach but what it calls to mind the day I and Red Sisk went in swimming there and I saved his life (By this time the family are beginning to exchange amused, guilty glances They all know what is coming)

SID (with a sly blurry wink around) Ha! Now we—have it again!

MILLER (turning on him) Have what?

SID Nothing—go on with your swimming—don't mind me

MILLER (glares at him—but immediately is overcome by the reminiscient mood again) Red Sisk—his father kept a blacksmith shop where the Union Market is now—we kids called him Red because he had the damdest reddest crop of hair—

SID (as if he were talking to his plate) Remarkable!—the curious imagination—of little children

MRS MILLER (as she sees MILLER about to ex-

plode—interposes tactfully) Sid! Eat your lobster and shut up! Go on, Nat

MILLER (gives SID a withering look—then is off again) Well as I was saying Red and I went swimming that day Must have been—let me see—Red was fourteen bigger and older than me, I was only twelve—forty five years ago—wasn't a single house down there then—but there was a stake out where the whistling buoy is now about a mile out (TOMMY who has been having difficulty restraining himself lets out a stifled giggle MILLER bends a frowning gaze on him) One more sound out of you young man and you'll leave the table! 60

MRS MILLER (quickly interposing trying to stave off the story) Do eat your lobster Nat You didn't have any fish you know

MILLER (not liking the reminder—pettishly) Well if I'm going to be interrupted every second anyway— (He turns to his lobster and chews in silence for a moment)

MRS MILLER (trying to switch the subject) How's Anne's mother's rheumatism Mildred? 70

MILDRED Oh she's much better Ma She was in wading today She says salt water's the only thing that really helps her bunion 80

MRS MILLER Mildred! Where are your manners? At the table's no place to speak of—

MILLER (fallen into the reminiscient obsession again) Well as I was saying there was I and Red and he dared me to race him out to the stake and back Well I didn't let anyone dare me in those days I was a spunky kid So I said all right and we started out We swam and swam and were pretty evenly matched though, as I've said he was bigger and older than me but finally I drew ahead I was going along easy with lots in reserve, not a bit tired when suddenly I heard a sort of gasp from behind me—like this—'help (He imitates Everyone's eyes are firmly fixed on his plate except SID's) And I turned and there was Red his face all pinched and white and he says weakly Help Nat! I got a cramp in my leg! Well I don't mind telling you I got mighty scared I didn't know what to do Then suddenly I thought of the pile If I could pull him to that I could hang on to him till someone'd notice us But the pile was still—well I calculate it must have been two hundred feet away 90

SID Two hundred and fifty!

MILLER (in confusion) What's that?

SID Two hundred and fifty! I've taken down the distance every time you've saved Red's life for thirty years and the mean average to that pile is two hundred and fifty feet! (There is a burst of laughter from around the table SID continues complainingly) Why didn't you let that Red drown, anyway Nat? I never knew him but I know I'd never have liked him 110

MILLER (*really hurt forces a feeble smile to his lips and pretends to be a good sport about it*) Well guess you're right Sid. Guess I have told that one too many times and bored everyone. But it's a good true story for kids because it illustrates the danger of being foolhardy in the water—

MRS MILLER (*sensing the hurt in his tone comes to his rescue*) Of course it's a good story—and you tell it whenever you've a mind to. And you Sid if

10 you were in any responsible state I'd give you a good piece of my mind for teasing Nat like that.

MILLER (*with a sad self pitying smile at his wife*) Getting old I guess. Mother—getting to repeat myself. Someone ought to stop me.

MRS MILLER No such thing! You're as young as you ever were. (*She turns on Sid again angrily*) You eat your lobster and maybe it'll keep your mouth shut!

SID (*after a few chews—irrepressibly*) Lobster! Did you know Tommy your Uncle Sid is the man invented lobster? Fact! One day—when I was building the Pyramids—took a day off and just dashed off lobster. He was bigger'n older than me and he had the darndest reddest clop of han but I dashed him off just the same! Am I right Nat? (*Then suddenly in the tones of a side show barker*) Ladies and Gents—

MRS MILLER Meicy sakes! Can't you shut up?

SID In this cage you see the lobster. You will not believe me ladies and gents but it's a fact that this interesting bivalve only makes love to his mate once in every thousand years—but dearie me how he does enjoy it! (*The children roar* LILY and MRS MILLER laugh in spite of themselves—then look embarrassed MILLER guffaws—then suddenly grows shocked.)

MILLER Careful Sid careful. Remember you're at home.

40 TOMMY (*suddenly in a hoarse whisper to his mother with an awed glance of admiration at his uncle*) Ma! Look at him! He's eating that claw shells and all!

MRS MILLER (*horrified*) Sid do you want to kill yourself? Take it away from him Lily!

SID (*with great dignity*) But I prefer the shells. All famous epicures prefer the shells—to the less delicate coarser meat. It's the same with clams. Unless I eat the shells there is a certain peculiar oil that invariably poisons—Am I right Nat?

50 MILLER (*good naturedly*) You seem to be getting a lot of fun kidding me. Go ahead then I don't mind.

MRS MILLER He better go right up to bed for a while, that's what he better do.

SID (*considering this owlishly*) Bed? Yes maybe you're right. (*He gets to his feet*) I am not at all well—in very delicate condition—we are praying

for a boy. Am I right Nat? Nat, I kept telling you all day I was in delicate condition and yet you kept forcing demon chowder on me although you knew full well—even if you were full—that there is a certain peculiar oil in chowder that invariably—(*They are again all laughing—LILY hysterically*)

MRS MILLER Will you get to bed you idiot!

SID (*mutters graciously*) Immediately—if not sooner. (*He turns to pass behind LILY then stops staring down at her*) But wait. There is still a duty I must perform. No day is complete without it. Lily answer once and for all will you marry me?

LILY (*with an hysterical giggle*) No I won't—never!

SID (*nodding his head*) Right! And perhaps it's all for the best. For how could I forget the precepts taught me at mother's dying knee. Sidney she said never marry a woman who drinks! Lips that touch liquor shall never touch yours! (*Gazing at her mournfully*) Too bad! So fine a woman once—and now such a slave to rum! (*Turning to NAT*) What can we do to save her Nat? (*In a hoarse confidential whisper*) Better put her in institution where she'll be removed from temptation! The mere smell of it seems to drive her frantic!

MRS MILLER (*struggling with her laughter*) You leave Lily alone and go to bed!

SID Right! (*He comes around behind LILY's chair and moves toward the entrance to the back parlor—then suddenly turns and says with a bow*) Good night ladies—and gents. We will meet—bye and bye! (*He gives an imitation of a Salvation Army drum*) Boom! Boom! Boom! Come and be saved, Brothers! (*He starts to sing the old Army hymn*)

*In the sweet*

*Bye and bye*

*We will meet on that beautiful shore*

(*He turns and marches solemnly out through the back parlor singing*)

*Work and pray*

*While you may*

*We will meet in the sky bye and bye'*

(*MILLER and his wife and the children are all roaring with laughter* LILY giggles hysterically.)

MILLER (*subsiding at last*) Haw haw. He's a case if ever there was one! Darned if you can help laughing at him—even when he's poking fun at you!

MRS MILLER Goodness but he's a caution! Oh my sides ache I declare! I was trying so hard not to—but you can't help it he's so silly! But I suppose we really shouldn't. It only encourages him. But my lands—!

LILY (*suddenly gets up from her chair and stands rigidly her face working—jerkily*) That's just it—you shouldn't—even I laughed—it does encourage—

that's been his downfall—everyone always laughing, everyone always saying what a card he is what a case what a caution so funny—and he's gone on—and we're all responsible—making it easy for him—we're all to blame—and all we do is laugh!

MILLER (*wornedly*) Now Lily now you mustn't take on so. It isn't as serious as all that.

LILY (*bitterly*) Maybe—it is—to me. Or was—once (*Then contritely*) I'm sorry Nat. I'm sorry Essie. I didn't mean to—I'm not feeling myself to night. If you'll excuse me I'll go in the front parlor and lie down on the sofa awhile.

MRS MILLER Of course Lily. You do whatever you've a mind to. (*Lily goes out*)

MILLER (*frowning—a little shamefaced*) Hmm. I suppose she's right. Never knew Lily to come out with things that way before. Anything special happened Essie?

MRS MILLER Nothing I know—except he'd promised to take her to the fireworks.

MILLER That's so. Well, supposing I take her? I don't want her to feel disappointed.

MRS MILLER (*shaking her head*) Wild horses couldn't drag her there now.

MILLER Hmm. I thought she'd got completely over her foolishness about him long ago.

MRS MILLER She never will.

MILLER She'd better. He's got fired out of that Waterbury job—told me at the picnic after he'd got enough Dutch courage in him.

MRS MILLER Oh dear! Isn't he the fool!

MILLER I knew something was wrong when he came home. Well, I'll find a place for him on my paper again, of course. He always was the best news getter this town ever had. But I'll tell him he's got to stop his damn nonsense.

MRS MILLER (*doubtfully*) Yes.

MILLER Well, no use sitting here mourning over spilt milk. (*He gets up and* RICHARD, MILDRED TOMMY and MRS MILLER follow his example, the children quiet and a bit awed) You kids go out in the yard and try to keep quiet for a while, so's your Uncle Sid'll get to sleep and your Aunt Lily can rest.

TOMMY (*mournfully*) Ain't we going to set off the skyrockets and Roman candles, Pa?

MILLER Later, Son, later. It isn't dark enough for them yet anyway.

MILDRED Come on, Tommy. I'll see he keeps quiet. Pa.

MILLER That's a good girl. (*MILDRED and TOMMY go out through the screen door. RICHARD remains standing, sunk in bitter gloomy thoughts. MILLER glances at him—then irritably*) Well, Melancholy Dane, what are you doing?

RICHARD (*darkly*) I'm going out—for a while. (*Then suddenly*) Do you know what I think? It's Aunt Lily's fault, Uncle Sid's going to ruin. It's all

because he loves her and she keeps him dangling after her and eggs him on and ruins his life—like all women love to ruin men's lives! I don't blame him for drinking himself to death! What does he care if he dies after the way she's treated him! I'd do the same thing myself if I were in his boots!

MRS MILLER (*indignantly*) Richard! You stop that talk!

RICHARD (*quotes bitterly*)

*Drink! for you know not whence you come nor why  
Drink! for you know not why you go nor where!*

MILLER (*losing his temper—harshly*) Listen here young man! I've had about all I can stand of your nonsense for one day! You're growing a lot too big for your size, seems to me! You keep that damn fool talk to yourself, you hear me—or you're going to regret it! Mind now! (*He strides angrily away through the back parlor*)

MRS MILLER (*still indignant*) Richard, I'm ashamed of you that's what I am. (*She follows her husband. RICHARD stands for a second, bitter humiliated, wronged, even his father turned enemy, his face growing more and more rebellious. Then he forces a scornful smile to his lips*)

RICHARD Aw, what the hell do I care? I'll show them! (*He turns and goes out the screen door*)

CURTAIN

### ACT THREE—SCENE ONE

SCENE—*The back room of a bar in a small hotel—a small dingy room dimly lighted by two fly-specked globes in a fly-specked gilt chandelier suspended from the middle of the ceiling. At left front is the swinging door leading to the bar. At rear of door against the wall is a nickel-in-the-slot player-piano. In the rear wall, right, is a door leading to the Family Entrance and the stairway to the upstairs rooms. In the middle of the right wall is a window with closed shutters. Three tables with stained tops, four chairs around each table, are placed at center front at right toward rear, and at rear, center. A brass cuspidor is on the floor by each table. The floor is unswept, littered with cigarette and cigar butts. The hideous saffron-colored wall paper is blotched and spotted.*

*It is about 10 o'clock the same night. RICHARD and BELLE are discovered sitting at the table at center, BELLE at left of it, RICHARD in the next chair at the middle of table, rear, facing front.*

*BELLE is twenty, a rather pretty peroxide blonde, a typical college tart of the period and of the cheaper variety, dressed with tawdry flashiness. But*

she is a fairly recent recruit to the ranks and is still a bit remorseful behind her make up and defiantly careless manner

BELLE has an empty gin rickey glass before her RICHARD a half empty glass of beer He looks horribly timid embarrassed and guilty but at the same time thrilled and proud of at last mingling with the pace that kills

The player piano is grinding out Bedelia The  
10 BARTENDER a stocky young Irishman with a foxily cunning stupid face and a cynically wise grin stands just inside the bar entrance watching them over the swinging door

BELLE (with an impatient glance at her escort—rattling the ice in her empty glass) Drink up your beer why don't you? It's getting flat

RICHARD (embarrassedly) I let it get that way on purpose I like it better when it's flat (But he hastily gulps down the rest of his glass as if it were some  
20 nasty tasting medicine The BARTENDER chuckles audibly BELLE glances at him)

BELLE (nodding at the player piano scornfully) Say George is Bedelia the latest to hit this hick burg? Well it's only a couple of years old! You'll catch up in time! Why don't you get a new roll for that old box?

BARTENDER (with a grin) Complain to the boss not me Were not used to having Candy Kiddoes like you around—or maybe we'd get up to date

30 BELLE (with a professionally arch grin at him) Don't kid me please I can't bear it (Then she sings to the music from the piano her eyes now on RICHARD) Bedelia I'd like to feel yer (The BARTENDER laughs She smirks at RICHARD) Ever hear those words to it Kid?

RICHARD (who has heard them but is shocked at hearing a girl say them—putting on a blasé air) Sure lots of times That's old

40 BELLE (edging her chair closer and putting a hand over one of his) Then why don't you act as if you knew what they were all about?

RICHARD (terribly flustered) Sure I've heard that old parody lots of times What do you think I am?

BELLE I don't know, Kid Honest to God you've got me guessing

BARTENDER (with a mocking chuckle) He's a hot sport can't you tell it? I never seen such a spender My head's dizzy bringing you in drinks!

50 BELLE (laughs irritably—to RICHARD) Don't let him kid you You show him Loosen up and buy another drink what say?

RICHARD (humiliated—manfully) Sure Excuse me I was thinking of something else Have anything you like (He turns to the BARTENDER who has entered from the bar) See what the lady will have—and have one on me yourself

BARTENDER (coming to the table—with a wink at BELLE) That's talking! Didn't I say you were a sport? I'll take a cigar on you (To BELLE) What's yours Kiddo—the same?

60 BELLE Yes And forget the house rules this time and remember a rickey is supposed to have gin in it

BARTENDER (grinning) I'll try to—seeing it's you (Then to RICHARD) What's yours—another beer?

RICHARD (shyly) A small one please I'm not thirsty

BELLE (calculatedly taunting) Say honest are things that slow up at Harvard? If they had you down at New Haven they'd put you in a kindergarten! Don't be such a dead one! Filling up on beer will only make you sleepy Have a man's drink!

RICHARD (shamefacedly) All right I was going to Bring me a sloe gin fizz

BELLE (to BARTENDER) And make it a real one

BARTENDER (with a wink) I get you Something that'll warm him up eh? (He goes into the bar chuckling)

BELLE (looks around the room—irritably) Christ what a dump! (RICHARD is startled and shocked by this curse and looks down at the table) If this isn't the dearest burg I ever struck! Bet they take the sidewalks in after nine o'clock! (Then turning on him) Say honestly Kid does your mother know you're out?

RICHARD (defensively) Aw cut it out why don't you—tying to kid me!

BELLE (glances at him—then resolves on a new tack—patting his hand) All right I didn't mean to Dearie Please don't get sore at me

90 RICHARD I'm not sore

BELLE (seductively) You see it's this way with me I think you're one of the sweetest kids I've ever met—and I could like you such a lot if you'd give me half a chance—instead of acting so cold and indifferent

RICHARD I'm not cold and indifferent (Then solemnly tragic) It's only that I've got—a weight on my mind

BELLE (impatiently) Well get it off your mind and give something else a chance to work (The BARTENDER comes in bringing the drinks)

BARTENDER (setting them down—with a wink at BELLE) This'll warm him for you Forty cents that is—with the cigar

RICHARD (pulls out his roll and hands a dollar bill over—with exaggerated carelessness) Keep the change (BELLE emits a gasp and seems about to protest then thinks better of it The BARTENDER can not believe his luck for a moment—then pockets the bill hastily as if afraid RICHARD will change his mind)

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BARTENDER (*respect in his voice*) Thank you sir

RICHARD (*grandly*) Don't mention it

BARTENDER I hope you like the drink I took special pains with it (*The voice of the SALESMAN who has just come in the bar calls Hey! Anybody here? and a coin is rapped on the bar*) I'm coming (*The BARTENDER goes out*)

BELLE (*demonstrating gently a new appreciation for her escort's possibilities in her voice*) You shouldn't be so generous Deanie Gets him in bad habits A dime would have been plenty

RICHARD Ah that's all right I'm no tightwad

BELLE That's the talk I like to hear (*With a quick look toward the bar she stealthily pulls up her dress—to RICHARD'S shocked fascination—and takes a package of cheap cigarettes from her stocking*) Keep an eye out for that bartender Kid and tell me if you see him coming Gals are only allowed to smoke upstairs in the rooms he said

RICHARD (*embarrassedly*) All right I'll watch

BELLE (*having lighted her cigarette and inhaled deeply holds the package out to him*) Have a Sweet? You smoke don't you?

RICHARD (*taking one*) Sure! I've been smoking for the last two years—on the sly But next year I'll be allowed—that is pipes and cigars (*He lights his cigarette with elaborate nonchalance puffs but does not inhale—then watching her with shocked concern*) Say you oughtn't to inhale like that! Smokings awful bad for gals anyway even if they don't—

BELLE (*cynically amused*) Afraid it will stunt my growth? Gee Kid you are a sciem! You'll grow up to be a minister yet! (*RICHARD looks shamefaced She scans him impatiently—then holds up her drink*) Well here's how! Bottoms up now! Show me you really know how to drink It'll take that load off your mind (*RICHARD follows her example and they both drink the whole contents of their glasses before setting them down*) There! That's something like! Feel better?

RICHARD (*proud of himself—with a shy smile*) You bet

BELLE Well you'll feel still better in a minute—and then maybe you won't be so distant and unfriendly eh?

RICHARD I'm not

BELLE Yes, you are I think you just don't like me

RICHARD (*more manfully*) I do too like you

BELLE How much? A lot?

RICHARD Yes a lot

BELLE Show me how much! (*Then as he fidgets embarrassedly*) Want me to come sit on your lap?

RICHARD Yes—I— (*She comes and sits on his lap He looks desperately uncomfortable, but the gm is*

*rising to his head and he feels proud of himself and devilish too*)

BELLE Why don't you put your arm around me? (*He does so awkwardly*) No not that devil way Hold me tight You needn't be afraid of hurting me I like to be held tight don't you?

RICHARD Sure I do

BELLE Specially when it's by a nice handsome kid like you (*Ruffling his hair*) Gee you've got pretty hair do you know it? Honest I'm awfully strong for you! Why can't you be about me? I'm not so awfully ugly am I?

RICHARD No you're—you're pretty

BELLE You don't say it as if you meant it

RICHARD I do mean it—honest

BELLE Then why don't you kiss me? (*She bends down her lips toward his He hesitates then kisses her and at once shrinks back*) Call that kissing? Here (*She holds his head and fastens her lips on his and holds them there He starts and struggles She laughs*) What's the matter Honey Boy? Haven't you ever kissed like that before?

RICHARD Sure Lots of times

BELLE Then why did you jump as if I'd bitten you? (*Squirming around on his lap*) Gee I'm getting just crazy about you! What shall we do about it eh? Tell me

RICHARD I—don't know (*Then boldly*) I—I'm crazy about you too

BELLE (*kissing him again*) Just think of the wonderful time Edith and your friend Wint are having upstairs—while we sit down here like two dead ones A room only costs two dollars And, seeing I like you so much I'd only take five dollars—from you I'd do it for nothing—for you—only I've got to live and I owe my room rent in New Haven—and you know how it is I get ten dollars from everyone else Honest! (*She kisses him again then gets up from his lap—briskly*) Come on Go out and tell the bartender you want a room And hurry Honest I'm so strong for you I can hardly wait to get you upstairs!

RICHARD (*starts automatically for the door to the bar—then hesitates a great struggle going on in his mind—timidity disgust at the money element shocked modesty and the guilty thought of MURIEL fighting it out with the growing tipsiness that makes him want to be a hell of a fellow and go in for all forbidden fruit and makes this tart a romantic evil vampire in his eyes Finally he stops and mutters in confusion*) I can't

BELLE What are you too bashful to ask for a room? Let me do it then (*She starts for the door*)

RICHARD (*desperately*) No—I don't want you to—I don't want to

BELLE (*surveying him anger coming into her eyes*) Well if you aren't the lousiest cheap skate!

RICHARD I'm not a cheap skate!

BELLE Keep me around here all night fooling with you when I might be out with some real live one—if there is such a thing in this burg!—and now you quit on me! Don't be such a piker! You've got five dollars! I seen it when you paid for the drinks so don't hand me any lies!

RICHARD I—Who said I hadn't? And I'm not a piker! If you need the five dollars so bad—for your room rent—you can have it without—I mean I'll be glad to give—*(He has been fumbling in his pocket and pulls out his nine dollar roll and holds out the five to her)*

BELLE *(hardly able to believe her eyes almost snatches it from his hand—then laughs and immediately becomes sentimentally grateful)* Thanks Kid Gee—oh, thanks—Gee forgive me for losing my temper and bawling you out will you? Gee you're a regular peach! You're the nicest kid I've ever met! *(She kisses him and he grins proudly a hero to himself now on many counts)* Gee you're a peach! Thanks again!

RICHARD *(grandly—and quite tipsily)* It's—nothing—only too glad *(Then boldly)* Here—give me another kiss and that'll pay me back

BELLE *(kissing him)* I'll give you a thousand if you want 'em. Come on let's sit down and we'll have another drink—and this time I'll blow you just to show my appreciation *(She calls)* Hey George! bring us another round—the same!

RICHARD *(a remnant of caution coming to him)* I don't know as I ought to—

BELLE Oh another won't hurt you And I want to blow you see *(They sit down in their former places)*

RICHARD *(boldly draws his chair closer and puts an arm around her—tipsily)* I like you a lot—now I'm getting to know you You're a darned nice girl

BELLE Nice is good! Tell me another! Well if I'm so nice why didn't you want to take me upstairs?  
That's what I don't get

RICHARD *(lying boldly)* I did want to—only I—*(Then he adds solemnly)* I've sworn off *(The BARTENDER enters with the drinks)*

BARTENDER *(setting them on the table)* Here's your pleasure *(Then regarding RICHARD'S arm about her waist)* Ho ho we're coming on I see *(RICHARD grins at him muzzily)*

BELLE *(digs into her stocking and gives him a dollar)* Here This is mine *(He gives her change and she tips him a dime and he goes out She puts the five RICHARD had given her in her stocking and picks up her glass)* Here's how—and thanks again *(She sips)*

RICHARD *(boisterously)* Bottoms up! Bottoms up! *(He drinks all of his down and sighs with exaggerated satisfaction)* Gee that's good stuff all night *(Hugging her)* Give me another kiss Belle

BELLE *(kisses him)* What did you mean a minute ago when you said you'd sworn off?

RICHARD *(solemnly)* I took an oath I'd be faithful 60

BELLE *(cynically)* Till death do us part eh? Who's the girl?

RICHARD *(shortly)* Never mind

BELLE *(bristling)* I'm not good enough to talk about her I suppose?

RICHARD I didn't—mean that You're all right *(Then with tipsy gravity)* Only you oughtn't to lead this kind of life It isn't right—for a nice girl like you Why don't you reform?

BELLE *(sharply)* Nix on that line of talk! Can it you hear! You can do a lot with me for five dollars—but you can't reform me see Mind your own business Kid and don't butt in where you're not wanted!

RICHARD I—I didn't mean to hurt your feelings

BELLE I know you didn't mean You're only like a lot of people who mean well to hear them tell it *(Changing the subject)* So you're faithful to your one love eh? *(With an ugly sneer)* And how about her? Bet you she's out with a guy under some bush this minute giving him all he wants Don't be a sucker Kid! Even the little flies do it!

RICHARD *(starting up from his chair again—angrily)* Don't you say that! Don't you dare!

BELLE *(unimpressed—with a cynical shrug of her shoulders)* All right Have it your own way and be a sucker! It cuts no ice with me

RICHARD You don't know her or—

BELLE And don't want to Shut up about her can't you? *(She stares before her bitterly RICHARD subsides into scowling gloom He is becoming perceptibly more intoxicated with each moment now The BARTENDER and the SALESMAN appear just in side the swinging door The BARTENDER nods toward BELLE giving the SALESMAN a wink The SALESMAN grins and comes into the room carrying his highball in his hand He is a stout jowly faced man in his late thirties dressed with cheap nattiness with the professional breeziness and jocular kid em along manner of his kind BELLE looks up as he enters and he and she exchange a glance of complete recognition She knows his type by heart and he knows hers)*

SALESMAN *(passes by her to the table at right—grinning genially)* Good evening

BELLE Good evening

SALESMAN *(sitting down)* Hope I'm not butting in on your party—but my dogs were giving out standing at that bar

BELLE All right with me *(Giving RICHARD a rather contemptuous look)* I've got no party on

SALESMAN That sounds hopeful

RICHARD *(suddenly recites sentimentally)*



*But I wouldn't do such cause I loved her too much  
But I learned about women from her*

(Turns to scowl at the SALESMAN—then to BELLE)  
Let's have nother drink!

BELLE You've had enough (RICHARD subsides  
muttering to himself)

SALESMAN What is it—a child poet or a child  
actor?

BELLE Don't know Got me guessing

SALESMAN Well if you could shake the cradle  
robbing act maybe we could do a little business

BELLE That's easy I just pull my freight (She  
shakes RICHARD by the arm) Listen Kid Here's an  
old friend of mine Mr Smith of New Haven just  
come in I'm going over and sit at his table for a  
while see And you better go home

RICHARD (blinking at her and scowling) I'm never  
going home! I'll show them!

BELLE Have it your own way—only let me up  
(She takes his arm from around her and goes to sit  
by the SALESMAN RICHARD stares after her offend-  
edly)

RICHARD Go on What do I care what you do?  
(He recites scornfully) For a woman's only a  
woman but a good cigars a smoke

SALESMAN (as BELLE sits beside him) Well, what  
kind of beer will you have Sister?

BELLE Mine's a gin rickey

SALESMAN You've got extravagant tastes I'm sorry  
to see

RICHARD (begins to recite sepulchrally)

*Yet each man kills the thing he loves,  
By each let this be heard*

SALESMAN (grinning) Say this is rich! (He calls  
encouragement) That's swell dope, young feller  
Give us some more

RICHARD (ignoring him—goes on more rhetor-  
ically)

*Some do it with a bitter look  
Some with a flattering word  
The coward does it with a kiss  
The brave man with a sword!*

(He stares at BELLE gloomily and mutters trag-  
ically) I did it with a kiss! I'm a coward

SALESMAN That's the old stuff Kid You've got  
something on the ball all right! Give us another—  
right over the old pan now!

BELLE (with a laugh) Get the hook!

RICHARD (glowering at her—tragically)

*Oho they cried the world is wide  
But fettered limbs go lame!  
And once or twice to throw the dice  
Is a gentlemanly game,*

*But he does not win who plays with Sin  
In the secret House of Shame!*

BELLE (angrily) Aw can it! Give us a rest from  
that bunk!

SALESMAN (mockingly) This gal of yours don't  
appreciate poetry She's a lowbrow But I'm the kid  
that eats it up My middle name is Kelly and Sheets! 60  
Give us some more of the same! Do you know The  
Lobster and the Wise Guy? (Turns to BELLE seri-  
ously) No kidding that's a peach! I heard a  
guy recite it at Poli's Maybe this nut knows it Do  
you Kid? (But RICHARD only glowers at him gloom-  
ily without answering)

BELLE (surveying RICHARD contemptuously) He's  
copped a fine skinful—and gee, he's hardly had any  
thing

RICHARD (suddenly—with a dire emphasis) And 70  
then—at ten o'clock—Eilert Lovborg will come—  
with vine leaves in his hair!

BELLE And bats in his belfry if he's you!

RICHARD (regards her bitterly—then starts to his  
feet bellicosely—to the SALESMAN) I don't believe  
you ever knew her in New Haven at all! You just  
picked her up now! You leave her alone you hear!  
You won't do anything to her—not while I'm here  
to protect her!

BELLE (laughing) Oh my God! Listen to it! 80

SALESMAN Sssh! This is a scream! Wait! (He  
addresses RICHARD in tones of exaggerated melo-  
drama) Curse you Jack Dalton, if I won't unhand  
her what then?

RICHARD (threateningly) I'll give you a good  
punch in the snoot that's what! (He moves toward  
their table)

SALESMAN (with mock terror—screams in fal-  
setto) Help! Help! (The BARTENDER comes in ir-  
ritably) 90

BARTENDER Hey Cut out the noise What the  
hell's up with you?

RICHARD (tipsily) He's too—damn fresh!

SALESMAN (with a wink) He's going to murder  
me (Then gets a bright idea for eliminating RICH-  
ARD—seriously to the BARTENDER) It's none of my  
business Brother but if I were in your boots I'd  
give this young souse the gate He's under age any  
fool can see that

BARTENDER (guiltily) He told me he was over 100  
eighteen

SALESMAN Yes and I tell you I'm the Pope—but  
you don't have to believe me If you're not looking  
for trouble I'd advise you to get him started for  
some other gin mill and let them do the lying if  
anything comes up

BARTENDER Hmm (He turns to RICHARD angrily  
and gives him a push) Come on now On your way!  
You'll stir up no trouble in here! Beat it now!

RICHARD I will not beat it!

BARTENDER Oho won't you? *(He gives him an other push that almost sends him sprawling)*

BELLE *(callously)* Give him the bum's rush! I'm sick of his bull! *(RICHARD turns furiously and tries to punch the BARTENDER)*

BARTENDER *(avoids the punch)* Oho you would would you! *(He grabs RICHARD by the back of the neck and the seat of the pants and marches him ignominiously toward the swinging door)*

RICHARD Leggo of me you dirty coward!

BARTENDER Quiet now—or I'll pin a Mary Ann on your jaw that'll quiet you! *(He rushes him through the screen door and a moment later the outer doors are heard swinging back and forth)*

SALESMAN *(with a chuckle)* Hand it to me Kid How was that for a slick way of getting rid of him?

BELLE *(suddenly sentimental)* Poor kid I hope he makes home all right I liked him—before he got soured

SALESMAN Who is he?

BELLE The boy who's upstairs with my friend told me but I didn't pay much attention Name's Miller His old man runs a paper in this one horse burg I think he said

SALESMAN *(with a whistle)* Phew! He must be Nat Miller's kid, then

BARTENDER *(coming back from the bar)* Well he's on his way—with a good boot in the tail to help him!

SALESMAN *(with a malicious chuckle)* Yes? Well maybe that boot will cost you a job Brother Know Nat Miller who runs the *Globe*? That's his kid

BARTENDER *(his face falling)* The hell he is! Who said so?

SALESMAN The baby doll *(Getting up)* Say I'll go keep cases on him—see he gets on the trolley all right anyway Nat Miller's a good scout *(He hurries out)*

BARTENDER *(viciously)* God damn the luck! If he ever finds out I served his kid, he'll run me out of town *(He turns on BELLE furiously)* Why didn't you put me wise you lousy tramp you!

BELLE Hey! I don't stand for that kind of talk—not from no hick beer squirter like you see!

BARTENDER *(furiously)* You don't don't you? Who was it but you told me to hand him dynamite in that fizz? *(He gives her chair a push that almost throws her to the floor)* Beat it you—and beat it quick—or I'll call Sullivan from the corner and have you run in for street walking! *(He gives her a push that lands her against the family-entrance door)* Get the hell out of here—and no long waits!

BELLE *(opens the door and goes out—turns and calls back viciously)* I'll fix you for this you thick Mick, if I have to go to jail for it *(She goes out and slams the door)*

BARTENDER *(looks after her worriedly for a second—then shrugs his shoulders)* That's only her bull *(Then with a sigh as he returns to the bar)* Them lousy tramps is always getting this dump in Dutch!

CURTAIN

## ACT THREE—SCENE TWO

SCENE—Same as Act One—Sitting-room of the Miller home—about 11 o'clock the same night

MILLER is sitting in his favorite rocking chair at left of table front He has discarded collar and tie coat and shoes and wears an old worn brown dressing-gown and disreputable looking carpet slippers He has his reading specs on and is running over items in a newspaper But his mind is plainly preoccupied and worried and he is not paying much attention to what he reads

MRS MILLER sits by the table at right front She also has on her specs A sewing basket is on her lap and she is trying hard to keep her attention fixed on the doily she is doing But as in the case of her husband but much more apparently her mind is preoccupied and she is obviously on tenterhooks of nervous uneasiness

LILY is sitting in the armchair by the table at rear facing right She is pretending to read a novel but her attention wanders too and her expression is sad although now it has lost all its bitterness and become submissive and resigned again

MILDRED sits at the desk at right front writing two words over and over again stopping each time to survey the result critically, biting her tongue in tensely concentrated on her work

TOMMY sits on the sofa at left front He has had a hard day and is terribly sleepy but will not acknowledge it His eyes blink shut on him his head begins to nod but he isn't giving up and every time he senses any of the family glancing in his direction he goads himself into a bright eyed wakefulness

MILDRED *(finally surveys the two words she has been writing and is satisfied with them)* There *(She takes the paper over to her mother)* Look, Ma I've been practising a new way of writing my name Don't look at the others only the last one Don't you think it's the real goods?

MRS MILLER *(pulled out of her preoccupation)* Don't talk that horrible slang It's bad enough for boys but for a young girl supposed to have manners—my goodness when I was your age, if my mother'd ever heard me—

MILDRED Well don't you think it's nice then?

MRS MILLER *(sinks back into preoccupation—scanning the paper—vaguely)* Yes very nice Mil

died—very nice indeed (*Hands the paper back mechanically*)

MILDRED (*is a little piqued but smiles*) Absent minded! I don't believe you even saw it (*She passes around the table to show her*) AUNT LILY MILLER *gives an uneasy glance at his wife and then as if afraid of meeting her eye looks quickly back at his paper again*)

MRS MILLER (*staring before her—sighs worriedly*) Oh I do wish Richard would come home!

MILLER There now Essie He'll be in any minute now Don't you worry about him

MRS MILLER But I do worry about him!

LILY (*surveying MILDRED'S handiwork—smiling*) This is fine Mildred Your penmanship is improving wonderfully But don't you think that maybe you've got a little too many flourishes?

MILDRED (*disappointedly*) But Aunt Lily that's just what I was practising hardest on

MRS MILLER (*with another sigh*) What time is it now Nat?

MILLER (*adopting a joking tone*) I'm going to buy a clock for in here You have me reaching for my watch every couple of minutes (*He has pulled his watch out of his vest pocket—with forced carelessness*) Only a little past ten

MRS MILLER Why you said it was that an hour ago! Nat Miller you're telling me a fib so's not to worry me You let me see that watch!

MILLER (*guiltily*) Well it's quarter to eleven—but that's not so late—when you remember it's Fourth of July

MRS MILLER If you don't stop talking Fourth of July—! To hear you go on you'd think that was an excuse for anything from murder to picking pockets!

MILDRED (*has brought her paper around to her father and now shoves it under his nose*) Look Pa

MILLER (*seizes on this interruption with relief*) Let's see Hmm Seems to me you've been inventing a new signature every week lately What are you in training for—writing checks? You must be planning to catch a rich husband

MILDRED (*with an arch toss of her head*) No wedding bells for me! But how do you like it Pa?

MILLER It's overpowering—no other word for it overpowering! You could put it on the Declaration of Independence and not feel ashamed

MRS MILLER (*desolately almost on the verge of tears*) It's all right for you to laugh and joke with Mildred! I'm the only one in this house seems to care— (*Her lips tremble*)

MILDRED (*a bit disgustedly*) Ah Ma Dick only sneaked off to the fireworks at the beach you wait and see

MRS MILLER Those fireworks were over long ago If he had he'd be home

LILY (*soothingly*) He probably couldn't get a

seat the trolleys are so jammed, and he had to walk home

MILLER (*seizing on this with relief*) Yes I never thought of that but I'll bet that's it 60

MILDRED Ah don't let him worry you, Ma He just wants to show off he's heartbroken about that silly Muriel—and get everyone fussing over him and wondering if he hasn't drowned himself or something

MRS MILLER (*snappily*) You be quiet! The way you talk at times I really believe you're that hard hearted you haven't got a heart in you! (*With an accusing glance at her husband*) One thing I know you don't get that from me! (*He meets her eye and avoids it guiltily She sniffs and looks away from him around the room TOMMY who is nodding and blinking is afraid her eye is on him He straightens alertly and speaks in a voice that in spite of his effort is dripping with drowsiness*) 70

TOMMY Let me see what you wrote Mid

MILDRED (*cruelly mocking*) You? You're so sleepy you couldn't see it

TOMMY (*vahantly*) I am not sleepy!

MRS MILLER (*has fixed her eye on him*) My gracious I was forgetting you were still up! You run up to bed this minute! It's hours past your bed time! 80

TOMMY But it's the Fourth of July Ain't it Pa?

MRS MILLER (*gives her husband an accusing stare*) There! You see what you've done? You might know he'd copy your excuses! (*Then sharply to TOMMY*) You heard what I said Young Man!

TOMMY Aw Ma can't I stay up a little longer?

MRS MILLER I said no! You obey me and no more arguing about it! 90

TOMMY (*drags himself to his feet*) Aw! I should think I could stay up till Dick—

MILLER (*kindly but firmly*) You heard your ma say no more arguing When she says git you better git (*TOMMY accepts his fate resignedly and starts around kissing them all good night*)

TOMMY (*kissing her*) Good night Aunt Lily

LILY Good night dear Sleep well

TOMMY (*pecking at MILDRED*) Good night, you 100

MILDRED Good night you

TOMMY (*kissing him*) Good night, Pa

MILLER Good night Son Sleep tight

TOMMY (*kissing her*) Good night Ma

MRS MILLER Good night Here! You look feverish Let me feel of your head No you're all right Hurry up now And don't forget your prayers

(*TOMMY goes slowly to the doorway—then turns suddenly the discovery of another excuse lighting up his face*)

TOMMY Here's another thing Ma When I was up to the water closet last—

MRS MILLER (*sharply*) When you were where?

TOMMY The bathroom 110

MRS MILLER That's better

TOMMY Uncle Sid was snoring like a fog horn—and he's right next to my room. How can I ever get to sleep while he's— (*He is overcome by a jaw cracking yawn*)

MRS MILLER I guess you'd get to sleep all night if you were inside a fog horn. You run along now (*TOMMY gives up grins sleepily and moves off to bed. As soon as he is off her mind all her former uneasiness comes back on MRS MILLER tenfold. She sighs, moves restlessly, then finally asks*) What time is it now, Nat?

MILLER Now, Essie. I just told you a minute ago.

MRS MILLER (*resentfully*) I don't see how you can take it so calm! Here it's midnight, you might say, and our Richard still out, and we don't even know where he is.

MILDRED I hear someone on the piazza. Bet that's him now, Ma.

MRS MILLER (*her anxiety immediately turning to relieved anger*) You give him a good piece of your mind, Nat. You hear me! You're too easy with him, that's the whole trouble! The idea of him daring to stay out like this! (*The front door is heard being opened and shut and someone whistling Waltz Me Around Again Willie*)

MILDRED No, that isn't Dick. It's Art.

MRS MILLER (*her face falling*) Oh, (*A moment later ARTHUR enters through the front parlor whistling softly, half under his breath, looking complacently pleased with himself*)

MILLER (*surveys him over his glasses, not with enthusiasm—shortly*) So you're back, eh? We thought it was Richard.

ARTHUR Is he still out? Where'd he go to?

MILLER That's just what we'd like to know. You didn't run into him anywhere, did you?

ARTHUR No, I've been at the Rands ever since dinner. (*He sits down in the armchair at left of table rear*) I suppose he sneaked off to the beach to watch the fireworks.

MILLER (*pretending an assurance he is far from feeling*) Of course. That's what we've been trying to tell your mother, but she insists on worrying her head off.

MRS MILLER But if he was going to the fireworks, why wouldn't he say so? He knew we'd let him.

ARTHUR (*with calm wisdom*) That's easy, Ma. (*He grins superiorly*) Didn't you hear him this morning showing off, bawling out the Fourth like an anarchist? He wouldn't want to renege on that to you—but he'd want to see the old fireworks just the same. (*He adds complacently*) I know. He's at the foolish age.

MILLER (*stares at ARTHUR with ill-concealed astonishment, then grins*) Well, Arthur, by gosh, you make me feel as if I owed you an apology when you

talk horse sense like that. (*He turns to his wife, greatly relieved*) Arthur's hit the nail right on the head. I think, Essie, that was what I couldn't figure out—why he—but now it's clear as day.

MRS MILLER (*with a sigh*) Well, I hope you're right. But I wish he was home.

ARTHUR (*takes out his pipe and fills and lights it with solemn gravity*) He oughtn't to be allowed out this late at his age. I wasn't Fourth or no Fourth—if I remember.

MILLER (*a twinkle in his eyes*) Don't tax your memory trying to recall those ancient days of your youth. (*MILDRED laughs and ARTHUR looks sheepish. But he soon regains his aplomb*)

ARTHUR (*importantly*) We had a corking dinner at the Rands. We had sweetbreads on toast.

MRS MILLER (*arising momentarily from her depression*) Just like the Rands to put on aus before you! I never could see anything to sweetbreads. Always taste like soap to me. And no real nourishment to them. I wouldn't have the pesky things on my table! (*ARTHUR again feels sat upon*)

MILDRED (*teasingly*) Did you kiss Elsie good night?

ARTHUR Stop trying to be so darn funny all the time! You give me a pain in the ear!

MILDRED And that's where she gives me a pain the stuck-up thing!—thinks she's the whole cheese!

MILLER (*irritably*) And it's where your everlasting wrangling gives me a pain, you two! Give us a rest! (*There is silence for a moment*)

MRS MILLER (*sighs worriedly again*) I do wish that boy would get home!

MILLER (*glances at her, uneasily, peeks surreptitiously at his watch—then has an inspiration and turns to ARTHUR*) Arthur, what's this I hear about your having such a good singing voice? Rand was telling me he liked nothing better than to hear you sing—said you did every night you were up there. Why don't you ever give us folks at home here a treat?

ARTHUR (*pleased but still nursing wounded dignity*) I thought you'd only sit on me.

MRS MILLER (*perking up—proudly*) Arthur has a real nice voice. He practises when you're not at home. I didn't know you cared for singing, Nat.

MILLER Well, I do—nothing better—and when I was a boy I had a fine voice myself, and folks used to say I'd ought— (*Then abruptly, mindful of his painful experience with reminiscence at dinner looking about him guiltily*) Hmm. But don't hide your light under a bushel, Arthur. Why not give us a song or two now? You can play for him, can't you, Mildred?

MILDRED (*with a toss of her head*) I can play as well as Elsie Rand, at least!

ARTHUR (*ignoring her—clearing his throat im-*

portantly) I've been singing a lot tonight I don't know if my voice—

MILDRED (*forgetting her grudge grabs her brother's hand and tugs at it*) Come on Don't play modest You know you're just dying to show off (*This puts ARTHUR off it at once He snatches his hand away from her angrily*)

ARTHUR Let go of me you! (*Then with surly dignity*) I don't feel like singing tonight Pa I will some other time

MILLER You let him alone Mildred! (*He winks at ARTHUR, indicating with his eyes and a nod of his head MRS MILLER who has again sunk into worried brooding He makes it plain by this pantomime that he wants him to sing to distract his mother's mind*)

ARTHUR (*puts aside his pipe and gets up promptly*) Oh—sure I'll do the best I can (*He follows MILDRED into the front parlor where he switches on the lights*)

MILLER (*to his wife*) It won't keep Tommy awake Nothing could And Sid he'd sleep through an earthquake (*Then suddenly looking through the front parlor—grumpily*) Darn it speak of the devil here he comes Well he's had a good sleep and he'd ought to be sobered up (*LILY gets up from her chair and looks around her huntedly as if for a place to hide MILLER says soothingly*) Lily, you just sit down and read your book and don't pay any attention to him (*She sits down again and bends over her book tensely From the front parlor comes the tinkling of a piano as MILDRED runs over the scales In the midst of this SID enters through the front parlor All the effervescence of his jag has worn off and he is now suffering from a bad case of hangover—nervous sick a prey to gloomy remorse and bitter feelings of self-loathing and self-pity His eyes are bloodshot and puffed his face bloated the fringe of hair around his baldness tousled and tufty He sidles into the room guiltily his eyes shifting about avoiding looking at anyone*)

SID (*forcing a sickly twitching smile*) Hello

MILLER (*considerately casual*) Hello Sid Had a good nap? (*Then as SID swallows hard and is about to break into further speech MILDRED'S voice comes from the front parlor I haven't played that in ever so long but I'll try and she starts an accompaniment MILLER motions SID to be quiet*) Sssh! Arthur's going to sing for us (*SID flattens himself against the edge of the bookcase at center rear miserably self-conscious and ill at ease there but nervously afraid to move anywhere else ARTHUR begins to sing He has a fairly decent voice but his method is untrained sentimentality to a dripping degree He sings that old sentimental favorite Then You'll Remember Me The effect on his audience is instant MILLER gazes before him with a ruminating melancholy his face seeming to become gently sorrowful and old*

MRS MILLER *stares before her her expression becoming more and more doleful LILY forgets to pretend to read her book but looks over it her face growing tragically sad As for SID he is moved to his remorseful guilt stricken depths His mouth pulls down at the corners and he seems about to cry The song comes to an end MILLER starts then claps his hands enthusiastically and calls* Well done Arthur—well done! Why you've got a splendid voice! Give us some more! You liked that didn't you Essie?

MRS MILLER (*dolefully*) Yes—but it's sad—terrible sad

SID (*after swallowing hard suddenly blurts out*) Nat and Essie—and Lily—I—I want to apologize—for coming home—the way I did—there's no excuse—but I didn't mean—

MILLER (*sympathetically*) Of course Sid It's all forgotten

MRS MILLER (*rousing herself—affectionately pitying*) Don't be a goose Sid We know how it is with picnics You forget it (*His face lights up a bit but his gaze shifts to LILY with a mute appeal hoping for a word from her which is not forthcoming Her eyes are fixed on her book her body tense and rigid*)

SID (*finally blurts out desperately*) Lily—I'm sorry—about the fireworks Can you—forgive me? (*But LILY remains implacably silent A stricken look comes over SID'S face In the front parlor MILDRED is heard saying But I only know the chorus—and she starts another accompaniment*)

MILLER (*comes to SID'S rescue*) Sssh! We're going to have another song Sit down Sid (*SID hanging his head flees to the farthest corner left front and sits at the end of the sofa facing front hunched up elbows on knees face in hands his round eyes childishly wounded and woe-begone ARTHUR sings the popular Dearie playing up its sentimental values for all he is worth The effect on his audience is that of the previous song intensified—especially upon SID As he finishes MILLER again starts and applauds*) Mighty fine Arthur! You sang that darned well! Didn't he, Essie?

MRS MILLER (*dolefully*) Yes—but I wish he wouldn't sing such sad songs (*Then her lips tremble*) Richard's always whistling that

MILLER (*hastily—calls*) Give us something cheery next one Arthur You know just for variety's sake

SID (*suddenly turns toward LILY—his voice choked with tears—in a passion of self denunciation*) You're right Lily!—right not to forgive me!—I'm no good and never will be!—I'm a no good drunken bum!—you shouldn't even wipe your feet on me!—I'm a dirty rotten drunk!—no good to myself or anybody else!—if I had any guts I'd kill myself and good riddance!—but I haven't!—I'm yellow, too!—a yellow drunken bum! (*He hides his face in his*

hands and begins to sob like a sick little boy This is too much for LILY All her bitter hurt and steely resolve to ignore and punish him vanish in a flash swamped by a pitying love for him She runs and puts her arm around him—even kisses him tenderly and impulsively on his bald head and soothes him as if he were a little boy MRS MILLER almost equally moved has half risen to go to her brother too but MILLER winks and shakes his head vigorously and motions her to sit down )

LILY There! Don't cry Sid! I can't bear it! Of course I forgive you! Haven't I always forgiven you? I know you're not to blame—So don't Sid!

SID (lifts a tearful humbly grateful pathetic face to her—but a face that the dawn of a cleansed conscience is already beginning to restore to its natural Puckish expression) Do you really forgive me—I know I don't deserve it—can you really—?

LILY (gently) I told you I did Sid—and I do

SID (kisses her hand humbly like a big puppy licking it) Thanks Lily I can't tell you—(In the front parlor ARTHUR begins to sing rollickingly Waiting at the Church and after the first line or two MILDRED joins in SID's face lights up with appreciation and automatically he begins to tap one foot in time still holding fast to LILY's hand When they come to sent around a note this is what she wrote he can no longer resist but joins in a shaky bawl)

Can't get away to marry you today My wife won't let me! (As the song finishes the two in the other room laugh MILLER and SID laugh LILY smiles at SID's laughter Only MRS MILLER remains dolefully preoccupied as if she hadn't heard )

MILLER That's fine Arthur and Mildred That's darned good

SID (turning to LILY enthusiastically) You ought to hear Vesta Victoria sing that! Gosh she's great! I heard her at Hammerstein's Victoria—you remember that tip I made to New York

LILY (her face suddenly tired and sad again—for her memory of certain aspects of that trip is the opposite from what he would like her to recall at this moment—gently disengaging her hand from his—with a hopeless sigh) Yes I remember Sid (He is overcome momentarily by guilty confusion She goes quietly and sits down in her chair again In the front parlor, from now on MILDRED keeps starting to run over popular tunes but always gets stuck and turns to another )

MRS MILLER (suddenly) What time is it now Nat? (Then without giving him a chance to answer) Oh I'm getting worried something dreadful N—! You don't know what might have happened to Richard! You read in the papers every day about boys getting run over by automobiles

LILY Oh don't say that Essie!

MILLER (sharply to conceal his own reawakened apprehension) Don't get to imagining things now!

MRS MILLER Well why couldn't it happen with everyone that owns one out tonight and lots of those diving drunk? Or he might have gone down to the beach dock and fallen overboard! (On the verge of hysteria) Oh I know something dreadfuls happened! And you can sit there listening to songs and laughing as if—Why don't you do something? Why don't you go out and find him? (She bursts into tears )

LILY (comes to her quickly and puts her arm around her) Essie you mustn't worry so! You'll make yourself sick! Richard's all right I've got a feeling in my bones he's all right

MILDRED (comes hurrying in from the front parlor) What's the trouble? (ARTHUR appears in the doorway beside her She goes to her mother and also puts an arm around her) Ah don't cry Ma! Dick'll turn up in a minute or two wait and see!

ARTHUR Sure he will!

MILLER (has gotten to his feet, frowning—soberly) I was going out to look—if he wasn't back by twelve sharp That'd be the time it'd take him to walk from the beach if he left after the last car But I'll go now if it'll ease your mind I'll take the auto and drive out the beach road—and likely pick him up on the way (He has taken his collar and tie from where they hang from one corner of the book case at rear center and is starting to put them on) You better come with me Arthur

ARTHUR Sure thing Pa (Suddenly he listens and says) Sssh! There's someone on the piazza now—coming around to this door too That must be him No one else would—

MRS MILLER Oh thank God thank God!

MILLER (with a sheepish smile) Darn him! I've a notion to give him hell for worrying us all like this (The screen door is pushed violently open and RICHARD lurches in and stands swaying a little blinking his eyes in the light His face is a pasty pallor shining with perspiration and his eyes are glassy The knees of his trousers are dirty one of them torn from the sprawl on the sidewalk he had taken following the BARTENDER'S kick They all gape at him too paralyzed for a moment to say anything )

MRS MILLER Oh God what's happened to him! He's gone crazy! Richard!

SID (the first to regain presence of mind—with a grin) Crazy nothing He's only soused!

ARTHUR He's drunk that's what! (Then shocked and condemning) You've got your nerve! You fresh kid! We'll take that out of you when we get you down to Yale!

RICHARD (with a wild gesture of defiance—maudlinly dramatic)

*Yesterday this Days Madness did prepare  
Tomorrow's Silence Triumph or Despair  
Drink! for—*

MILLER (*his face grown stern and angry takes a threatening step toward him*) Richard! How dare—!

MRS MILLER (*hysterically*) Don't you strike him Nat! Don't you—!

SID (*grabbing his arm*) Steady Nat! Keep your temper! No good bawling him out now! He don't know what he's doing!

MILLER (*controlling himself and looking a bit ashamed*) All right—you're right Sid

RICHARD (*drunkenly glorying in the sensation he is creating—recites with dramatic emphasis*) And then—I will come—with vine leaves in my hair! (*He laughs with a double dyed sardonicism*)

MRS MILLER (*staring at him as if she couldn't believe her eyes*) Richard! You're intoxicated!—you bad, wicked boy you!

RICHARD (*forces a wicked leer to his lips and quotes with ponderous mockery*) Fancy that Hedda! (*Then suddenly his whole expression changes his pallor takes on a greenish sea sick tinge his eyes seem to be turned inward uneasily—and all pose gone he calls to his mother appealingly like a sick little boy*) Ma! I feel—rotten! (*MRS MILLER gives a cry and starts to go to him but SID steps in her way*)

SID You let me take care of him Essie I know this game backwards

MILLER (*putting his arm around his wife*) Yes you leave him to Sid

SID (*his arm around RICHARD—leading him off through the front parlor*) Come on Old Sport! Up stairs we go! Your old Uncle Sid'll fix you up He's the kid that wrote the book!

MRS MILLER (*staring after them—still aghast*) Oh, it's too terrible! Imagine our Richard! And did you hear him talking about some Hedda? Oh I know he's been with one of those bad women I know he has—my Richard! (*She hides her face on MILLER'S shoulder and sobs heartbrokenly*)

MILLER (*a tired harassed deeply worried look on his face—soothing her*) Now now, you mustn't get to imagining such things! You mustn't Essie! (*LILY and MILDRED and ARTHUR are standing about awkwardly with awed shocked faces*)

CURTAIN

## ACT FOUR—SCENE ONE

SCENE—*The same—Sitting room of the Miller house—about one o'clock in the afternoon of the following day*

*As the curtain rises the family with the exception of RICHARD are discovered coming in through the back parlor from dinner in the dining room MILLER and his wife come first His face is set in an expression of frowning severity MRS MILLER'S face is drawn and worried She has evidently had no rest yet from a sleepless tearful night SID is himself again his expression as innocent as if nothing had occurred the previous day that remotely concerned him And outside of eyes that are bloodshot and nerves that are shaky he shows no aftereffects except that he is terribly sleepy LILY is gently sad and depressed ARTHUR is self consciously a virtuous young man against whom nothing can be said MILDRED and TOMMY are subdued covertly watching their father*

*They file into the sitting room in silence and then stand around uncertainly as if each were afraid to be the first to sit down The atmosphere is as stiltedly grave as if they were attending a funeral service Their eyes keep fixed on the head of the house who has gone to the window at right and is staring out frowningly savagely chewing a toothpick*

MILLER (*finally—irritably*) Damn it I'd ought to be back at the office putting in some good licks! I've a whole pile of things that have got to be done today!

MRS MILLER (*accusingly*) You don't mean to tell me you're going back without seeing him? It's your duty—!

MILLER (*exasperatedly*) Course I'm not! I wish you'd stop jumping to conclusions! What else did I come home for I'd like to know? Do I usually come way back here for dinner on a busy day? I was only wishing this hadn't come up—just at this particular time (*He ends up very lamely and is irritably conscious of the fact*)

TOMMY (*who has been fidgeting restlessly—unable to bear the suspense a moment longer*) What is it Dick done? Why is everyone scared to tell me?

MILLER (*seizes this as an escape valve—turns and fixes his youngest son with a stern forbidding eye*) Young man I've never spanked you yet but that don't mean I never will! Seems to me that you've been just itching for it lately! You keep your mouth shut till you're spoken to—or I warn you some things going to happen!

MRS MILLER Yes Tommy you keep still and don't bother your pa (*Then warningly to her husband*) Careful what you say Nat Little pitchers have big ears

MILLER (*peremptorily*) You kids skedaddle—all of you Why are you always hanging around the house? Go out and play in the yard or take a walk and get some fresh air (*MILDRED takes TOMMY'S hand and leads him out through the front parlor ARTHUR hangs back as if the designation kids couldn't possibly apply to him His father notices*

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*this—impatiently*) You too Arthur (*ARTHUR goes out with a stiff wounded dignity*)

LILY (*tactfully*) I think I'll go for a walk too (*She goes out through the front parlor* SID *makes a movement as if to follow her*)

MILLER I'd like you to stay Sid—for a while anyway

SID Sure (*He sits down in the rocking chair at right rear of table and immediately yawns*) Gosh I'm dead Don't know what's the matter with me today Can't seem to keep awake

MILLER (*with caustic sarcasm*) Maybe that demon chowder you drank at the picnic poisoned you! (*SID looks sheepish and forces a grin* Then MILLER *turns to his wife with the air of one who determinedly faces the unpleasant*) Where is Richard?

MRS MILLER (*flusteredly*) He's still in bed I made him stay in bed to punish him—and I thought he ought to anyway after being so sick But he says he feels all right

SID (*with another yawn*) Course he does When you're young you can stand anything without it feazing you Why I remember when I could come down on the morning after fresh as a daisy and eat a breakfast of pork chops and fried onions and— (*He stops guiltily*)

MILLER (*bitingly*) I suppose that was before eating lobster shells had ruined your iron constitution!

MRS MILLER (*regards her brother severely*) If I was in your shoes I'd keep still! (*Then turning to her husband*) Richard must be feeling better He ate all the dinner I sent up Norah says

MILLER I thought you weren't going to give him any dinner—to punish him

MRS MILLER (*guiltily*) Well—in his weakened condition—I thought it best— (*Then defensively*) But you needn't think I haven't punished him I've given him pieces of my mind he won't forget in a hurry And I've kept reminding him his real punishment was still to come—that you were coming home to dinner on purpose—and then he'd learn that you could be terrible stern when he did such awful things

MILLER (*stirs uncomfortably*) Hmm!

MRS MILLER And that's just what it's your duty to do—punish him good and hard! The idea of him daring— (*Then hastily*) But you be careful how you go about it Nat Remember he's like you inside—too sensitive for his own good And he never would have done it I know if it hadn't been for that darned little dunce Muriel and her numbskull father—and then all of us teasing him and hurting his feelings all day—and then you lost your temper and were so sharp with him right after dinner before he went out

MILLER (*resentfully*) I see this is going to work round to where it's all my fault!

MRS MILLER Now I didn't say that did I? Don't go losing your temper again And here's another thing You know as well as I Richard would never have done such a thing alone Why he wouldn't know how! He must have been influenced and led by someone

MILLER Yes I believe that Did you worm out of him who it was? (*Then angrily*) By God I'll make whoever it was regret it!

MRS MILLER No he wouldn't admit there was anyone (*Then triumphantly*) But there is one thing I did worm out of him—and I can tell you it relieved my mind more'n anything You know I was afraid he'd been with one of those bad women Well turns out there wasn't any Hedda She was just out of those books he's been reading He swears he's never known a Hedda in his life And I believe him Why he seemed disgusted with me for having such a notion (*Then lamely*) So somehow—I can't kind of feel it's all as bad as I thought it was (*Then quickly and indignantly*) But it's bad enough goodness knows—and you punish him good just the same The idea of a boy his age—! Shall I go up now and tell him to get dressed you want to see him?

MILLER (*helplessly—and irritably*) Yes! I can't waste all day listening to you!

MRS MILLER (*worriedly*) Now you keep your temper Nat remember! (*She goes out through the front parlor*)

MILLER Damn women anyway! They always get you mixed up Their minds simply don't know what logic is! (*Then he notices that SID is dozing—sharply*) Sid!

SID (*blinking—mechanically*) I'll take the same (*Then hurriedly*) What'd you say, Nat?

MILLER (*caustically*) What I didn't say was what'll you have (*Irritably*) Do you want to be of some help or don't you? Then keep awake and try and use your brains! This is a damned sight more serious than Essie has any idea! She thinks there weren't any guls mixed up with Richard's spree last night—but I happen to know there were! (*He takes a letter from his pocket*) Here's a note a woman left with one of the boys downstairs at the office this morning—didn't ask to see me just said give me this He'd never seen her before—said she looked like a tart (*He has opened the letter and reads*) Your son got the booze he drank last night at the Pleasant Beach House The bartender there knew he was under age but served him just the same He thought it was a good joke to get him soused If you have any guts you will run that bastard out of town Well what do you think of that? It's a woman's handwriting—not signed, of course

SID She's one of the babies, all right—judging from her elegant language

MILLER See if you recognize the handwriting

SID (*with a reproachful look*) Nat I resent the implication that I correspond with all the tramps around this town (*Looking at the letter*) No I don't know who this one could be (*Handing the letter back*) But I deduce that the lady had a run in with the barkeep and wants revenge

MILLER (*grimly*) And I deduce that before that she must have picked up Richard—or how would she know who he was?—and took him to this dive

SID Maybe The Pleasant Beach House is nothing but a bed house— (*Quickly*) At least so I've been told

MILLER That's just the sort of damned fool thing he might do to spite Muriel in the state of mind he was in—pick up some tart And shed try to get him drunk so—

SID Yes it might have happened like that—and it might not How're we ever going to prove it? Everyone at the Pleasant Beach will lie their heads off

MILLER (*simply and proudly*) Richard won't lie

SID Well don't blame him if he don't remember everything that happened last night (*Then sincerely concerned*) I hope you're wrong Nat That kind of baby is dangerous for a kid like Dick—in more ways than one You know what I mean

MILLER (*frowningly*) Yep—and that's just what's got me worried Damn it I've got to have a straight talk with him—about women and all those things I ought to have long ago

SID Yes You ought

MILLER I've tried to a couple of times I did it all right with Wilbur and Lawrence and Arthur when it came time—but hell with Richard I always get sort of ashamed of myself and can't get started right You feel in spite of all his bold talk out of books that he's so damned innocent inside

SID I know I wouldn't like the job (*Then after a pause—curiously*) How were you figuring to punish him for his sins?

MILLER (*frowning*) To be honest with you Sid I'm damned if I know All depends on what I feel about what he feels when I first size him up—and then it'll be like shooting in the dark

SID If I didn't know you so well I'd say don't be too hard on him (*He smiles a little bitterly*) If you remember I was always getting punished—and see what a lot of good it did me!

MILLER (*kindly*) Oh there's lots worse than you around so don't take to boasting (*Then at a sound from the front parlor—with a sigh*) Well here comes the Bad Man I guess

SID (*getting up*) I'll beat it (*But it is MRS MILLER who appears in the doorway looking guilty and defensive* SID *sits down again*)

MRS MILLER I'm sorry Nat—but he was sound

asleep and I didn't have the heart to wake him I waited for him to wake up but he didn't

MILLER (*conceding a relief of which he is ashamed—exasperatedly*) Well I'll be double damned! If you're not the— 60

MRS MILLER (*defensively aggressive*) Now don't lose your temper at me Nat Miller! You know as well as I do he needs all the sleep he can get today—after last night's ructions! Do you want him to be taken down sick? And what difference does it make to you anyway? You can see him when you come home for supper can't you? My goodness I never saw you so savage tempered! You'd think you couldn't bear waiting to punish him! 70

MILLER (*outraged*) Well I'll be eternally— (*Then suddenly he laughs*) No use talking you certainly take the cake! But you know darned well I told you I'm not coming home to supper tonight I've got a date with Jack Lawson that may mean a lot of new advertising and it's important

MRS MILLER Then you can see him when you do come home

MILLER (*covering his evident relief at this respite with a fuming manner*) All right! All right! I give up! I'm going back to the office (*He starts for the front parlor*) Bring a man all the way back here on a busy day and then you— No consideration— (*He disappears and a moment later the front door is heard shutting behind him*) 80

MRS MILLER Well! I never saw Nat so bad tempered

SID (*with a chuckle*) Bad temper nothing He's so tickled to get out of it for a while he can't see straight! 90

MRS MILLER (*with a snuff*) I hope I know him better than you (*Then fussing about the room setting this and that in place while SID yawns drowsily and blinks his eyes*) Sleeping like a baby—so innocent looking You'd think butter wouldn't melt in his mouth It all goes to show you never can tell by appearances—not even when it's your own child The idea!

SID (*drowsily*) Oh Dick's all right, Essie Stop worrying 100

MRS MILLER (*with a snuff*) Of course you'd say that I suppose you'll have him out with you painting the town red the next thing! (*As she is talking RICHARD appears in the doorway from the sitting room He shows no ill effects from his experience the night before In fact he looks surprisingly healthy He is dressed in old clothes that look as if they had been hurriedly flung on His expression is one of hang dog guilt mingled with a defensive defiance*)

RICHARD (*with self conscious unconcern, ignoring his mother*) Hello Sid 110

MRS MILLER (*whirls on him*) What are you doing here Young Man? I thought you were asleep! Seems

to me you woke up pretty quick—just after your pa left the house!

RICHARD (*sulkily*) I wasn't asleep. I heard you in the room.

MRS MILLER (*outraged*) Do you mean to say you were deliberately deceiving—

RICHARD I wasn't deceiving. You didn't ask if I was asleep.

MRS MILLER It amounts to the same thing and you know it! It isn't enough your wickedness last night, but now you have to take to lying!

RICHARD I wasn't lying. Ma, if you'd asked if I was asleep I'd have said no.

MRS MILLER I've a good mind to send you straight back to bed and make you stay there!

RICHARD Ah, what for, Ma? It was only giving me a headache lying there.

MRS MILLER If you've got a headache, I guess you know it doesn't come from that! And imagine me standing there and feeling sorry for you like a fool—even having a run in with your pa because—But you wait till he comes back tonight! If you don't catch it!

RICHARD (*sulkily*) I don't care.

MRS MILLER You don't care? You talk as if you weren't sorry for what you did last night!

RICHARD (*defiantly*) I'm not sorry.

MRS MILLER Richard! You ought to be ashamed! I'm beginning to think you're hardened in wickedness—that's what!

RICHARD (*with bitter despondency*) I'm not sorry because I don't care a darn what I did or what's done to me or anything about anything! I won't do it again—

MRS MILLER (*seizing on this to relent a bit*) Well, I'm glad to hear you say that anyway!

RICHARD But that's not because I think it was wicked or any such old foggy moral notion, but because it wasn't any fun. It didn't make me happy and funny like it does Uncle Sid—

SID (*drowsily*) What's that? Who's funny?

RICHARD (*ignoring him*) It only made me sadder—and sick—so I don't see any sense in it.

MRS MILLER Now you're talking sense! That's a good boy.

RICHARD But I'm not sorry I tried it once—curing the soul by means of the senses, as Oscar Wilde says (*Then with despairing pessimism*). But what does it matter what I do or don't do? Life is all a stupid farce! I'm through with it! (*With a sinister smile*) It's lucky there aren't any of General Gabler's pistols around—or you'd see if I'd stand it much longer!

MRS MILLER (*worriedly impressed by this threat—but pretending scorn*) I don't know anything about General Gabler—I suppose that's more of

those darned books—but you're a silly gabbler, you yourself when you talk that way!

RICHARD (*darkly*) That's how little you know about me.

MRS MILLER (*giving in to her worry*) I wish you wouldn't say those terrible things—about life and pistols! You don't want to worry me to death, do you?

RICHARD (*reassuringly stoical now*) You needn't worry, Ma. It was only my despair talking. But I'm not a coward. I'll face—my fate.

MRS MILLER (*stands looking at him puzzledly—then gives it up with a sigh*) Well, all I can say is you're the queerest boy I ever did hear of! (*Then solicitously putting her hand on his forehead*) How's your headache? Do you want me to get you some Bromo Seltzer?

RICHARD (*taken down—disgustedly*) No, I don't! Aw, Ma, you don't understand anything!

MRS MILLER Well, I understand this much. It's your liver, that's what! You'll take a good dose of salts tomorrow morning and no nonsense about it! (*Then suddenly*) My goodness, I wonder what time it's getting to be. I've got to go upstairs. (*She goes to the front parlor doorway—then turns*) You stay here, Richard, you hear? Remember, you're not allowed out today—for a punishment. (*She hurries away*) RICHARD sits in tragic gloom, SID without opening his eyes speaks to him drowsily.

SID Well, how's my fellow Rum Pot, as good old Dowie calls us? Got a head?

RICHARD (*startled—sheepishly*) Aw, don't go dragging that up, Uncle Sid. I'm never going to be such a fool again. I tell you.

SID (*with drowsy cynicism—not unmixed with bitterness at the end*) Seems to me I've heard some one say that before. Who could it have been? I wonder? Why, if it wasn't Sid Davis! Yes, sir, I've heard him say that very thing a thousand times, must be. But then he's always fooling, you can't take a word he says seriously, he's a card, that Sid is!

RICHARD (*darkly*) I was desperate, Uncle—even if she wasn't worth it. I was wounded to the heart.

SID I like to be quick better myself—more stylish. (*Then sadly*) But you're right. Love is hell on a poor sucker. Don't I know it? (*RICHARD is disgusted and disdains to reply*) SID's chin sinks on his chest and he begins to breathe noisily fast asleep. RICHARD glances at him with aversion. There is a sound of someone on the porch and the screen door is opened and MILDRED enters. She smiles on seeing her uncle, then gives a start on seeing RICHARD.

MILDRED Hello! Are you allowed up?

RICHARD Of course I'm allowed up.

MILDRED (*comes and sits in her father's chair at right front of table*) How did Pa punish you?

RICHARD He didn't. He went back to the office without seeing me.

MILDRED Well you'll catch it later (*Then rebukingly*) And you ought to If you'd ever seen how awful you looked last night!

RICHARD Ah forget it can't you?

MILDRED Well are you ever going to do it again, that's what I want to know

RICHARD What's that to you?

MILDRED (*with suppressed excitement*) Well if you don't solemnly swear you won't—then I won't give you something I've got for you

RICHARD Don't try to kid me You haven't got anything

MILDRED I have, too

RICHARD What?

MILDRED Wouldn't you like to know! I'll give you three guesses

RICHARD (*with disdainful dignity*) Don't bother me I'm in no mood to play riddles with kids!

MILDRED Oh well if you're going to get snippy! Anyway you haven't promised yet

RICHARD (*a prey to keen curiosity now*) I promise What is it?

MILDRED What would you like best in the world?

RICHARD I don't know What?

MILDRED And you pretend to be in love! If I told Muiel that!

RICHARD (*breathlessly*) Is it—from her?

MILDRED (*laughing*) Well I guess it's a shame to keep you guessing Yes It is from her I was walking past her place just now when I saw her waving from their parlor window, and I went up and she said give this to Dick and she didn't have a chance to say anything else because her mother called her and said she wasn't allowed to have company So I took it—and here it is (*She gives him a letter folded many times into a tiny square RICHARD opens it with a trembling eagerness and reads MILDRED watches him curiously—then sighs affectedly*) Gee it must be nice to be in love like you are—all with one person

RICHARD (*his eyes shining*) Gee Mid do you know what she says—that she didn't mean a word in that other letter Her old man made her write it And she loves me and only me and always will, no matter how they punish her!

MILDRED My! I'd never think she had that much spunk

RICHARD Huh! You don't know her! Think I could fall in love with a girl that was afraid to say her soul's her own? I should say not! (*Then more gleefully still*) And she's going to try and sneak out and meet me tonight She says she thinks she can do it (*Then suddenly feeling this enthusiasm before MILDRED is entirely the wrong note for a cynical pessimist—with an affected bitter laugh*) Ha! I knew darned well she couldn't hold out—that she'd ask to see me again (*He misquotes cynically*) Women never

know when the curtain has fallen They always want another act

MILDRED Is that so Smaity?

RICHARD (*as if he were weighing the matter*) I don't know whether I'll consent to keep this date or not

MILDRED Well I know! You're not allowed out you silly! So you can't!

RICHARD (*dropping all pretense—defiantly*) Can't I though! You wait and see if I can't! I'll see her tonight if it's the last thing I ever do! I don't care how I'm punished after!

MILDRED (*admiringly*) Goodness! I never thought you had such nerve!

RICHARD You promise to keep your face shut Mid—until after I've left—then you can tell Pa and Ma where I've gone—I mean if they're worrying I'm off like last night

MILDRED All right Only you've got to do something for me when I ask

RICHARD Course I will (*Then excitedly*) And say Mid! Right now's the best chance for me to get away—while everyone's out! Ma'll be coming back soon and she'll keep watching me like a cat— (*He starts for the back parlor*) I'm going I'll sneak out the back

MILDRED (*excitedly*) But what'll you do till night time? It's ages to wait

RICHARD What do I care how long I wait! (*Intensely sincere now*) I'll think of her—and dream! I'd wait a million years and never mind it—for her! (*He gives his sister a superior scornful glance*) The trouble with you is you don't understand what love means! (*He disappears through the back parlor MILDRED looks after him admiringly SID puffs and begins to snore peacefully*)

CURTAIN

## ACT FOUR—SCENE TWO

SCENE—A strip of beach along the harbor At left a bank of dark earth running half diagonally back along the beach marking the line where the sand of the beach ends and fertile land begins The top of the bank is grassy and the trailing boughs of willow trees extend out over it and over a part of the beach At left front is a path leading up the bank between the willows On the beach at center front a white flat bottomed rowboat is drawn up its bow about touching the bank the painter trailing up the bank evidently made fast to the trunk of a willow Half way down the sky at rear, left the crescent of the new moon casts a soft, mysterious caressing light over everything The sand of the beach shimmers

*palely The forward half (left of center) of the row boat is in the deep shadow cast by the willow the stern section is in moonlight In the distance the orchestra of a summer hotel can be heard very faintly at intervals*

RICHARD is discovered sitting sideways on the gunwale of the rowboat near the stern He is facing left watching the path He is in a great state of anxious expectancy squirming about uncomfortably on the narrow gunwale kicking at the sand restlessly twirling his straw hat with a bright colored band in stripes around on his finger

RICHARD (*thinking aloud*) Must be nearly nine I can hear the Town Hall clock strike it's so still tonight Gee I'll bet Ma had a fit when she found out I'd sneaked out I'll catch hell when I get back but it'll be worth it if only Muriel turns up she didn't say for certain she could gosh I wish she'd come! am I sure she wrote nine? (*He puts the straw hat on the seat amidships and pulls the folded letter out of his pocket and peers at it in the moonlight*) Yes it's nine all right (*He starts to put the note back in his pocket then stops and kisses it—then shoves it away hastily sheepish looking around him shamefacedly as if afraid he were being observed*) Aw that's silly no it isn't either not when you're really in love (*He jumps to his feet restlessly*) Darn it I wish she'd show up! think of something else that'll make the time pass quicker where was I this time last night? waiting outside the Pleasant Beach House Belle ah forget her! now when Muriel's coming that's a fine time to think of—but you hugged and kissed her not until I was drunk I didn't and then it was all showing off darned fool! and I didn't go upstairs with her even if she was pretty aw, she wasn't pretty she was all painted up she was just a whore she was everything dirty Muriel's a million times prettier anyway Muriel and I will go upstairs when we're married but that will be beautiful but I oughtn't even to think of that yet it's not right I'd never—now and she'd never she's a decent girl I couldn't love her if she wasn't but after we're married (*He gives a little shiver of passionate longing—then resolutely turns his mind away from these improper almost desecrating thoughts*) That damned ba'keep kicking me I'll bet you if I hadn't been drunk I'd have given him one good punch in the nose even if he could have licked me after! (*Then with a shiver of shamefaced repulsion and self disgust*) Aw you deserved a kick in the pants making such a darned slob of yourself reciting the Ballad of Reading Gaol to

those lowbrows! you must have been a fine sight when you got home having to be put to bed and getting sick! Pshaw! (*He squirms disgustedly*) Think of something else can't you? recite something see if you remember

*Nay let us walk from fire unto fire  
From passionate pain to deadlier delight—  
I am too young to live without desire  
Too young art thou to waste this summernight—*

gee that's a peach! I'll have to memorize the rest and recite it to Muriel the next time I wish I could write poetry about her and me (*He sighs and stares around him at the night*) Gee it's beautiful tonight as if it was a special night for me and Muriel Gee I love tonight I love the sand and the trees and the grass and the water and the sky and the moon it's all in me and I'm in it God it's so beautiful! (*He stands staring at the moon with a rapt face From the distance the Town Hall clock begins to strike This brings him back to earth with a start*) There's nine now (*He peers at the path apprehensively*) I don't see her she must have got caught (*Almost tearfully*) Gee I hate to go home and catch hell without having seen her! (*Then calling a manly cynicism to his aid*) Aw who ever heard of a woman ever being on time I ought to know enough about life by this time not to expect (*Then with sudden excitement*) There she comes now Gosh! (*He heaves a huge sigh of relief—then recites dramatically to himself his eyes on the approaching figure*)

*And to my love mine own soul's heart more dear  
Than mine own soul more beautiful than God  
Who hath my being between the hands of her—*

(*Then hastily*) Mustn't let her know I'm so tickled I ought to be mad about that first letter any way if women are too sure of you, they treat you like slaves let her suffer for a change (*He starts to stroll around with exaggerated carelessness turning his back on the path hands in pockets whistling with insouciance Waiting at the Church*)

(MURIEL MC COMBER enters from down the path left front She is fifteen going on sixteen She is a pretty girl with a plump graceful little figure fluffy light brown hair big naive wondering dark eyes a round dimpled face a melting drawly voice Just now she is in a great thrilled state of timid adventurousness She hesitates in the shadow at the foot of the path waiting for RICHARD to see her but he resolutely goes on whistling with back turned and she has to call him )

MURIEL Oh Dick

RICHARD (*turns around with an elaborate simulation of being disturbed in the midst of profound meditation*) Oh hello Is it nine already? Gosh time passes—when you're thinking

MURIEL (*coming toward him as far as the edge of the shadow—disappointedly*) I thought you'd be waiting right here at the end of the path I'll bet you'd forgotten I was even coming

10 RICHARD (*strolling a little toward her but not too far—carelessly*) No I hadn't forgotten honest But I got to thinking about life

MURIEL You might think of me for a change after all the risk I've run to see you! (*Hesitating timidly on the edge of the shadow*) Dick! You come here to me I'm afraid to go out in that bright moonlight where anyone might see me

RICHARD (*coming toward her—scornfully*) Aw, there you go again—always scared of life!

20 MURIEL (*indignantly*) Dick Miller I do think you've got an awful nerve to say that after all the risks I've run making this date and then sneaking out! You didn't take the trouble to sneak any letter to me I notice!

RICHARD No because after your first letter I thought everything was dead and past between us

MURIEL And I'll bet you didn't care one little bit! (*On the verge of humiliated tears*) Oh I was a fool ever to come here! I've got a good notion to go 30 right home and never speak to you again! (*She half turns back toward the path*)

RICHARD (*frightened—immediately becomes terribly sincere—grabbing her hand*) Aw don't go Muriel! Please! I didn't mean anything like that honest I didn't! Gee if you knew how broken hearted I was by that first letter and how darned happy your second letter made me—!

40 MURIEL (*happily relieved—but appreciates she has the upper hand now and doesn't relent at once*) I don't believe you

RICHARD You ask Mid how happy I was She can prove it

MURIEL She'd say anything you told her to I don't care anything about what she'd say It's you You've got to swear to me—

RICHARD I swear!

MURIEL (*demurely*) Well then all right I'll believe you

50 RICHARD (*his eyes on her face lovingly—genuine adoration in his voice*) Gosh you're pretty tonight Muriel! It seems ages since we've been together! If you knew how I've suffered—!

MURIEL I did too

RICHARD (*unable to resist falling into his tragic literary pose for a moment*) The despair in my soul— (*He recites dramatically*) Something was dead in each of us And what was dead was Hope! That

was me! My hope of happiness was dead! (*Then with sincere boyish fervor*) Gosh, Muriel, it sure is wonderful to be with you again! (*He puts a timid arm around her awkwardly*) 60

MURIEL (*shyly*) I'm glad—it makes you happy I'm happy too

RICHARD Can't I—won't you let me kiss you—now? Please! (*He bends his face toward hers*)

MURIEL (*ducking her head away—timidly*) No You mustn't Don't—

RICHARD Aw why can't I?

MURIEL Because—I'm afraid

RICHARD (*discomfited—taking his arm from around her—a bit sulky and impatient with her*) 70 Aw that's what you always say! You're always so afraid! Aren't you ever going to let me?

MURIEL I will—sometime

RICHARD When?

MURIEL Soon maybe

RICHARD Tonight will you?

MURIEL (*coily*) I'll see

RICHARD Promise?

MURIEL I promise—maybe 80

RICHARD All right You remember you've promised (*Then coaxingly*) Aw don't let's stand here Come on out and we can sit down in the boat

MURIEL (*hesitantly*) It's so bright out there

RICHARD No one'll see You know there's never anyone around here at night

MURIEL (*illogically*) I know there isn't That's why I thought it would be the best place But there might be someone

RICHARD (*taking her hand and tugging at it gently*) There isn't a soul (*MURIEL steps out a little and looks up and down fearfully* RICHARD goes on insistently) Aw what's the use of a moon if you can't see it! 90

MURIEL But it's only a new moon That's not much to look at

RICHARD But I want to see you I can't here in the shadow I want to—drink in—all your beauty

MURIEL (*can't resist this*) Well all right—only I can't stay only a few minutes (*She lets him lead her toward the stern of the boat*) 100

RICHARD (*pleadingly*) Aw you can stay a little while can't you? Please! (*He helps her in and she settles herself in the stern seat of the boat facing diagonally left front*)

MURIEL A little while (*He sits beside her*) But I've got to be home in bed again pretending to be asleep by ten o'clock That's the time Pa and Ma come up to bed as regular as clock work and Ma always looks into my room 110

RICHARD But you'll have oodles of time to do that

MURIEL (*excitedly*) Dick you have no idea what I went through to get here tonight! My but it was exciting! You know Pa's punishing me by sending me

to bed at eight sharp and I had to get all undressed and into bed cause at half past he sends Ma up to make sure I've obeyed and she came up and I pretended to be asleep and she went down again and I got up and dressed in such a hurry—I must look a sight don't I?

RICHARD You do not! You look wonderful!

MURIEL And then I sneaked down the back stairs And the pesky old stairs squeaked and my heart was in my mouth I was so scared and then I sneaked out through the back yard keeping in the dark under the trees and—My but it was exciting! Dick you don't realize how I've been punished for your sake Pa's been so mean and nasty I've almost hated him!

RICHARD And you don't realize what I've been through for you—and what I'm in for—for sneaking out—(Then darkly) And for what I did last night—what your letter made me do!

MURIEL (*made terribly curious by his ominous tone*) What did my letter make you do?

RICHARD (*beginning to glory in this*) It's too long a story—and let the dead past bury its dead (Then with real feeling) Only it isn't past I can tell you! What I'll catch when Pa gets hold of me!

MURIEL Tell me Dick! Begin at the beginning and tell me!

RICHARD (*tragically*) Well after your old—your father left our place I caught holy hell from Pa

MURIEL Dick! You mustn't swear!

RICHARD (*somberly*) Hell is the only word that can describe it And on top of that to torture me more he gave me your letter After I'd read that I didn't want to live any more Life seemed like a tragic farce

MURIEL I'm so awful sorry Dick—honest I am! But you might have known I'd never write that unless—

RICHARD I thought your love for me was dead I thought you'd never loved me that you'd only been cruelly mocking me—to torture me!

MURIEL Dick! I'd never! You know I'd never!

RICHARD I wanted to die I sat and brooded about death Finally I made up my mind I'd kill myself

MURIEL (*excitedly*) Dick! You didn't!

RICHARD I did too! If there'd been one of Hedda Gable's pistols around you'd have seen if I wouldn't have done it beautifully! I thought when I'm dead she'll be sorry she ruined my life!

MURIEL (*cuddling up a little to him*) If you ever had! I'd have died too! Honest I would!

RICHARD But suicide is the act of a coward That's what stopped me (Then with a bitter change of tone) And anyway I thought to myself she isn't worth it

MURIEL (*huffily*) That's a nice thing to say!

RICHARD Well if you meant what was in the letter you wouldn't have been worth it would you?

MURIEL But I've told you Pa—

RICHARD So I said to myself I'm through with women they're all alike!

MURIEL I'm not

RICHARD And I thought what difference does it make what I do now? I might as well forget her and lead the pace that kills and drown my sorrows! You know I had eleven dollars saved up to buy you something for your birthday but I thought she's dead to me now and why shouldn't I throw it away? (Then hastily) I've still got almost five left Muriel, and I can get you something nice with that

MURIEL (*excitedly*) What do I care about your old presents? You tell me what you did!

RICHARD (*darkly again*) After it was dark I sneaked out and went to a low dive I know about

MURIEL Dick Miller I don't believe you ever!

RICHARD You ask them at the Pleasant Beach House if I didn't! They won't forget me in a hurry!

MURIEL (*impressed and horrified*) You went there? Why that's a terrible place! Pa says it ought to be closed by the police!

RICHARD (*darkly*) I said it was a dive didn't I? It's a secret house of shame And they let me into

a secret room behind the barroom There wasn't anyone there but a Princeton Senior I know—he belongs to Tiger Inn and he's fullback on the football team—and he had two chorus girls from New York with him and they were all drinking champagne

MURIEL (*disturbed by the entrance of the chorus girls*) Dick Miller! I hope you didn't notice—

RICHARD (*carelessly*) I had a highball by myself and then I noticed one of the girls—the one that wasn't with the fullback—looking at me She had strange looking eyes And then she asked me if I wouldn't drink champagne with them and come and sit with her

MURIEL She must have been a nice thing! (Then a bit falteringly) And did—you?

RICHARD (*with tragic bitterness*) Why shouldn't I when you'd told me in that letter you'd never see me again?

MURIEL (*almost tearfully*) But you ought to have known Pa made me—

RICHARD I didn't know that then (Then rubbing it in) Her name was Belle She had yellow hair—the kind that burns and stings you!

MURIEL I'll bet it was dyed!

RICHARD She kept smoking one cigarette after another—but that's nothing for a chorus girl

MURIEL (*indignantly*) She was low and bad that's what she was or she couldn't be a chorus girl and her smoking cigarettes proves it! (Then falteringly again) And then what happened?

RICHARD (*carelessly*) Oh we just kept drinking champagne—I bought a round—and then I had a fight with the barkeep and knocked him down be



cause he'd insulted her. He was a great big thug but—

MURIEL (*huffily*) I don't see how he could—insult that kind! And why did you fight for her? Why didn't the Princeton fullback who'd brought them there? He must have been bigger than you.

RICHARD (*stopped for a moment—then quickly*) He was too drunk by that time.

MURIEL And were you drunk?

RICHARD Only a little then. I was worse later (*Proudly*) You ought to have seen me when I got home! I was on the verge of delirium tremens!

MURIEL I'm glad I didn't see you. You must have been awful. I hate people who get drunk. I'd have hated you!

RICHARD Well, it was all your fault, wasn't it? If you hadn't written that letter—

MURIEL But I've told you I didn't mean— (*Then faltering but fascinated*) But what happened with that Belle—after—before you went home?

RICHARD Oh, we kept drinking champagne and she said she'd fallen in love with me at first sight and she came and sat on my lap and kissed me.

MURIEL (*stiffening*) Oh!

RICHARD (*quickly afraid he has gone too far*) But it was only all in fun and then we just kept on drinking champagne and finally I said good night and came home.

MURIEL And did you kiss her?

RICHARD No, I didn't.

MURIEL (*distractedly*) You did too! You're lying and you know it. You did too! (*Then tearfully*) And there I was right at that time lying in bed not able to sleep, wondering how I was ever going to see you again and crying my eyes out while you—! (*She suddenly jumps to her feet in a tearful fury*) I hate you! I wish you were dead! I'm going home this minute! I never want to lay eyes on you again! And this time I mean it! (*She tries to jump out of the boat but he holds her back. All the pose has dropped from him now and he is in a frightened state of contrition*)

RICHARD (*imploringly*) Muriel! Wait! Listen!

MURIEL I don't want to listen! Let me go! If you don't I'll bite your hand!

RICHARD I won't let you go! You've got to let me explain! I never—! Ouch! (*For Muriel has bitten his hand and it hurts and stung by the pain he lets go instinctively and she jumps quickly out of the boat and starts running toward the path. RICHARD calls after her with bitter despair and hurt*) All right! Go if you want to—if you haven't the decency to let me explain! I hate you too! I'll go and see Belle!

MURIEL (*seeing he isn't following her stops at the foot of the path—defiantly*) Well, go and see her—if that's the kind of girl you like! What do I care? (*Then as he only stares before him broodingly*

*sitting dejectedly in the stern of the boat a pathetic figure of injured grief*) You can't explain! What can you explain? You owned up, you kissed her!

RICHARD I did not. I said she kissed me.

MURIEL (*scornfully but drifting back a step in his direction*) And I suppose you just sat and let yourself be kissed! Tell that to the Maimes!

RICHARD (*injuredly*) All right! If you're going to call me a liar every word I say—

MURIEL (*drifting back another step*) I didn't call you a liar. I only meant—it sounds fishy. Don't you know it does?

RICHARD I don't know anything. I only know I wish I was dead!

MURIEL (*gently reproving*) You oughtn't to say that. It's wicked. (*Then after a pause*) And I suppose you'll tell me you didn't fall in love with her?

RICHARD (*scornfully*) I should say not! Fall in love with that kind of girl! What do you take me for?

MURIEL (*practically*) How do you know what you did if you drank so much champagne?

RICHARD I kept my head—with her. I'm not a sucker, no matter what you think!

MURIEL (*drifting nearer*) Then you didn't—love her?

RICHARD I hated her! She wasn't even pretty! And I had a fight with her before I left. She got so fresh I told her I loved you and never could love anyone else and for her to leave me alone.

MURIEL But you said just now you were going to see her—

RICHARD That was only bluff. I wouldn't—unless you left me. Then I wouldn't care what I did—any more than I did last night. (*Then suddenly defiant*) And what if I did kiss her once or twice? I only did it to get back at you!

MURIEL Dick!

RICHARD You're a fine one to blame me—when it was all your fault! Why can't you be fair? Didn't I think you were out of my life forever? Hadn't you written me you were? Answer me that!

MURIEL But I've told you a million times that Pa—

RICHARD Why didn't you have more sense than to let him make you write it? Was it my fault you didn't?

MURIEL It was your fault for being so stupid! You ought to have known he stood right over me and told me each word to write. If I'd refused it would only have made everything worse. I had to pretend so I'd get a chance to see you. Don't you see, Silly? And I had sense enough to sneak out to meet you tonight, didn't I? (*He doesn't answer. She moves nearer*) Still I can see how you felt the way you did—and maybe I am to blame for that. So I'll forgive and forget, Dick—if you'll swear to me you didn't even think of loving that—

RICHARD (*eagerly*) I didn't! I swear, Muriel I couldn't I love you!

MURIEL Well then—I still love you

RICHARD Then come back here why don't you?

MURIEL (*coolly*) It's getting late

RICHARD It's not near half past yet

MURIEL (*comes back and sits down by him shyly*)

All night—only I'll have to go soon Dick (*He puts his arm around her. She cuddles up close to him*)

10 I'm sorry—I hurt your hand

RICHARD That was nothing It felt wonderful—even to have you bite!

MURIEL (*impulsively takes his hand and kisses it*) There! That'll cure it (*She is overcome by confusion at her boldness*)

RICHARD You shouldn't—waste that—on my hand (*Then tremblingly*) You said—you'd let me—

MURIEL I said maybe

RICHARD Please Muriel You know—I want it so!

20 MURIEL Will it wash off—her kisses—make you forget you ever—for always?

RICHARD I should say so! I'd never remember—anything but it—never want anything but it—ever again

MURIEL (*shyly lifting her lips*) Then—all right—Dick (*He kisses her tremblingly and for a moment their lips remain together. Then she lets her head sink on his shoulder and sighs softly*) The moon is beautiful isn't it?

30 RICHARD (*kissing her hair*) Not as beautiful as you! Nothing is! (*Then after a pause*) Won't it be wonderful when we're married?

MURIEL Yes—but it's so long to wait

RICHARD Perhaps I needn't go to Yale Perhaps Pa will give me a job Then I'd soon be making enough to—

MURIEL You better do what your pa thinks best—and I'd like you to be at Yale (*Then patting his face*) Poor you! Do you think he'll punish you awful?

40 RICHARD (*intensely*) I don't know and I don't care! Nothing would have kept me from seeing you tonight—not if I'd had to crawl over red hot coals! (*Then falling back on Swinburne—but with passionate sincerity*) You have my being between the hands of you! You are my love mine own soul's heart more dear than mine own soul more beautiful than God!

MURIEL (*shocked and delighted*) Sssh! It's wrong to say that

50 RICHARD (*adoringly*) Gosh but I love you! Gosh I love you—Darling!

MURIEL I love you too—Sweetheart! (*They kiss. Then she lets her head sink on his shoulder again and they both sit in a rapt trance staring at the moon. After a pause—dreamily*) Where'll we go on our honeymoon Dick? To Niagara Falls?

RICHARD (*scornfully*) That dump where all the

silly fools go? I should say not! (*With passionate romanticism*) No well go to some far off wonderful place! (*He calls on Kipling to help him*) Somewhere out on the Long Trail—the trail that is always new—on the road to Mandalay! We'll watch the dawn come up like thunder out of China!

MURIEL (*hazily but happily*) That'll be wonderful won't it?

CURTAIN

#### ACT FOUR—SCENE THREE

SCENE—*The sitting room of the Miller house again—about 10 o'clock the same night. MILLER is sitting in his rocker at left front of table his wife in the rocker at right front of table. Moonlight shines through the screen door at right rear. Only the green shaded reading lamp is lit and by its light MILLER his specs on is reading a book while his wife sewing basket in lap is working industriously on a doily. MRS MILLER's face wears an expression of unworried content. MILLER's face has also lost its look of harassed preoccupation although he still is a prey to certain misgivings when he allows himself to think of them. Several books are piled on the table by his elbow the books that have been confiscated from RICHARD.*

MILLER (*chuckles at something he reads—then closes the book and puts it on the table*) MRS MILLER looks up from her sewing) This Shaw's a comical cuss—even if his ideas are so crazy they oughtn't to allow them to be printed And that Swinburne's got a fine swing to his poetry—if he'd only choose some other subjects besides loose women

MRS MILLER (*smiling teasingly*) I can see where you're becoming corrupted by those books too—pretending to read them out of duty to Richard when your nose has been glued to the page!

MILLER No no—but I've got to be honest There's something to them That Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam now I read that over again and liked it even better than I had before—parts of it that is where it isn't all about boozing

MRS MILLER (*has been busy with her own thoughts during this last—with a deep sigh of relief*) My but I'm glad Mildred told me where Richard went off to I'd have worried my heart out if she hadn't But now it's all right

MILLER (*frowning a little*) I'd hardly go so far as to say that Just because we know he's all right tonight doesn't mean last night is wiped out He's still got to be punished for that

MRS MILLER (*defensively*) Well if you ask me, I think after the way I punished him all day, and the

why I know he's punished himself he's had about all he deserves I've told you how sorry he was and how he said he'd never touch liquor again It didn't make him feel happy like Sid but only sad and sick, so he didn't see anything in it for him

MILLER Well if he's really got that view of it driven into his skull I don't know but I'm glad it all happened That'll protect him more than a thousand lectures—just horse sense about himself (*Then frowning again*) Still I can't let him do such things and go scot free And then besides there's another side to it— (*He stops abruptly*)

MRS MILLER (*uneasily*) What do you mean another side?

MILLER (*hastily*) I mean discipline There's got to be some discipline in a family I don't want him to get the idea he's got a stuffed shirt at the head of the table No he's got to be punished if only to make the lesson stick in his mind and I'm going to tell him he can't go to Yale seeing he's so undependable

MRS MILLER (*up in arms at once*) Not go to Yale! I guess he can go to Yale! Every man of your means in town is sending his boys to college! What would folks think of you? You let Wilbur go and you'd have let Lawrence only he didn't want to and you're letting Arthur! If our other children can get the benefit of a college education you're not going to pick on Richard—

MILLER Hush up for God's sake! If you'd let me finish what I started to say! I said I'd tell him that now—bluff—then later on I'll change my mind if he behaves himself

MRS MILLER Oh well if that's all— (*Then defensively again*) But it's your duty to give him every benefit He's got an exceptional brain that boy has! He's proved it by the way he likes to read all those deep plays and books and poetry

MILLER But I thought you— (*He stops grinning helplessly*)

MRS MILLER You thought I what?

MILLER Never mind

MRS MILLER (*sniffs but thinks it better to let this pass*) You mark my words that boy's going to turn out to be a great lawyer or a great doctor or a great writer or—

MILLER (*grinning*) You agree he's going to be great anyway

MRS MILLER Yes I most certainly have a lot of faith in Richard

MILLER Well so have I as far as that goes

MRS MILLER (*after a pause—judicially*) And as for his being in love with Muriel I don't see but what it might work out real well Richard could do worse

MILLER But I thought you had no use for her thought she was stupid

MRS MILLER Well so I did but if she's good for Richard and he wants her— (*Then inconsequently*) Ma used to say you weren't overbright but she changed her mind when she saw I didn't care if you were or not

MILLER (*not exactly pleased by this*) Well, I've been bright enough to—

MRS MILLER (*going on as if he had not spoken*) And Muriel's real cute looking I have to admit that Takes after her mother Alice Briggs was the prettiest girl before she married

MILLER Yes and Muriel will get big as a house after she's married the same as her mother did That's the trouble A man never can tell what he's letting himself in for— (*He stops, feeling his wife's eyes fixed on him with indignant suspicion*)

MRS MILLER (*sharply*) I'm not too fat and don't you say it!

MILLER Who was talking about you?

MRS MILLER And I'd rather have some flesh on my bones than be built like a string bean and bore a hole in a chair every time I sat down—like some people!

MILLER (*ignoring the insult—flatteringly*) Why no one'd ever call you fat Essie You're only plump like a good figure ought to be

MRS MILLER (*childishly pleased—gratefully giving tit for tat*) Well you're not skinny either—only slender—and I think you've been putting on weight lately too (*Having thus squared matters she takes up her sewing again A pause Then MILLER asks incredulously*)

MILLER You don't mean to tell me you're actually taking this Muriel crush of Richard's seriously do you? I know it's a good thing to encourage right now but—pshaw why Richard'll probably forget all about her before he's away six months, and she'll have forgotten him

MRS MILLER Don't be so cynical (*Then after a pause thoughtfully*) Well anyway he'll always have it to remember—no matter what happens after—and that's something

MILLER You bet that's something (*Then with a grin*) You surprise me at times with your deep wisdom

MRS MILLER You don't give me credit for ever having common sense that's why (*She goes back to her sewing*)

MILLER (*after a pause*) Where'd you say Sid and Lily had gone off to?

MRS MILLER To the beach to listen to the band (*She sighs sympathetically*) Poor Lily! Sid'll never change and she'll never marry him But she seems to get some queer satisfaction out of fussing over him like a hen that's hatched a duck—though Lord knows I wouldn't in her shoes!

MILLER Arthur's up with Elsie Rand, I suppose?

MRS MILLER Of course

MILLER Where's Mildred?

MRS MILLER Out walking with her latest I've forgot who it is I can't keep track of them (She smiles)

MILLER (*smiling*) Then from all reports we seem to be completely surrounded by love!

MRS MILLER Well we've had our share haven't we? We don't have to begrudge it to our children (Then has a sudden thought) But I've done all this talking about Muiel and Richard and clean forgot how wild old McComber was against it But he'll get over that I suppose

MILLER (*with a chuckle*) He has already I ran into him upstreet this afternoon and he was meek as pie He backed water and said he guessed I was right Richard had just copied stuff out of books and kids would be kids and so on So I came off my high horse a bit—but not too far—and I guess all that won't bother anyone any more (Then rubbing his hands together—with a boyish grin of pleasure) And I told you about getting that business from Lawson didn't I? It's been a good day Essie—a darned good day! (From the hall beyond the front parlor the sound of the front door being opened and shut is heard MRS MILLER leans forward to look pushing her specs up)

MRS MILLER (*in a whisper*) It's Richard

MILLER (*immediately assuming an expression of becoming gravity*) Hmm (He takes off his spectacles and puts them back in their case and straightens himself in his chair RICHARD comes slowly in from the front parlor He walks like one in a trance his eyes shining with a dreamy happiness his spirit still too exalted to be conscious of his surroundings or to remember the threatened punishment He carries his straw hat dangling in his hand quite unaware of its existence)

RICHARD (*dreamily like a ghost addressing fellow shades*) Hello

MRS MILLER (*staring at him worriedly*) Hello Richard

MILLER (*sizing him up shrewdly*) Hello Son

(RICHARD moves past his mother and comes to the far corner left front where the light is dimmest and sits down on the sofa and stares before him his hat dangling in his hand)

MRS MILLER (*with frightened suspicion now*) Goodness he acts queer! Nat, you don't suppose he's been—?

MILLER (*with a reassuring smile*) No It's love not liquor this time

MRS MILLER (*only partly reassured—sharply*) Richard! What's the matter with you? (He comes to himself with a start She goes on scoldingly) How many times have I told you to hang up your hat in the hall when you come in! (He looks at his hat as

if he were surprised at its existence She gets up fussily and goes to him) Here Give it to me I'll hang it up for you this once And what are you sitting over here in the dark for? Don't forget your father's been waiting to talk to you! (She comes back to the table and he follows her still half in a dream and stands by his father's chair MRS MILLER starts for the hall with his hat)

MILLER (*quietly but firmly now*) You better leave Richard and me alone for a while Essie

MRS MILLER (*turns to stare at him apprehensively*) Well—all right I'll go sit on the piazza Call me if you want me (Then a bit pleadingly) But you'll remember all I said, Nat won't you? (MILLER nods reassuringly She disappears through the front parlor RICHARD keenly conscious of himself as the about to be sentenced criminal by this time looks guilty and a bit defiant searches his father's expressionless face with uneasy side glances and steels himself for what is coming)

MILLER (*casually indicating MRS MILLER'S rocker*) Sit down, Richard (RICHARD slumps awkwardly into the chair and sits in a self-conscious unnatural position MILLER sizes him up keenly—then suddenly smiles and asks with quiet mockery) Well how are the vine leaves in your hair this evening?

RICHARD (*totally unprepared for this approach—shamefacedly mutters*) I don't know Pa

MILLER Turned out to be poison ivy, didn't they? (Then kindly) But you needn't look so alarmed I'm not going to read you any temperance lecture That'd bore me more than it would you And in spite of your damn foolishness last night I'm still giving you credit for having brains So I'm pretty sure anything I could say to you you've already said to yourself

RICHARD (*his head down—humbly*) I know I was a darned fool

MILLER (*thinking it well to rub in this aspect—disgustedly*) You sure were—not only a fool but a downright stupid disgusting fool! (RICHARD squirms his head still lower) It was bad enough for you to let me and Arthur see you but to appear like that before your mother and Mildred—! And I wonder if Muiel would think you were so fine if she ever saw you as you looked and acted then I think she'd give you your walking papers for keeps And you couldn't blame her No nice girl wants to give her love to a stupid drunk!

RICHARD (*writhing*) I know Pa

MILLER (*after a pause—quietly*) All right Then that settles—the boogie end of it (He sizes RICHARD up searchingly—then suddenly speaks sharply) But there is another thing that's more serious How about that tuit you went to bed with at the Pleasant Beach House?

RICHARD (*flabbergasted—stammers*) You know—? But I didn't! If they've told you about her down there, they must have told you I didn't! She wanted me to—but I wouldn't I gave her the five dollars just so she'd let me out of it Honest Pa I didn't! She made everything seem rotten and dirty—and—I didn't want to do a thing like that to Muriel—no matter how bad I thought she'd treated me—even after I felt drunk I didn't Honest!

10 MILLER How'd you happen to meet this lady anyway?

RICHARD I can't tell that Pa I'd have to snitch on someone—and you wouldn't want me to do that

MILLER (*a bit taken aback*) No I suppose I wouldn't Hmm Well I believe you—and I guess that settles that (*Then after a quick furtive glance at RICHARD he nerves himself for the ordeal and begins with a shamefaced self-conscious solemnity*) But listen here Richard it's about time you and I

20 I had a serious talk about—hmm—certain matters pertaining to—and now that the subjects come up of its own accord it's a good time—I mean there's no use in procrastinating further—so here goes (*But it doesn't go smoothly and as he goes on he becomes more and more guiltily embarrassed and self-conscious and his expressions more stilted* RICHARD sedulously avoids even glancing at him his own embarrassment made tenfold more painful by his father's) Richard you have now come to the age

30 when— Well you're a fully developed man in a way and it's only natural for you to have certain desires of the flesh to put it that way—I mean pertaining to the opposite sex—certain natural feelings and temptations—that'll want to be gratified—and you'll want to gratify them Hmm—well human society being organized as it is there's only one outlet for—unless you're a scoundrel and go around running decent guls—which you're not of course Well there are a certain class of women—always

40 have been and always will be as long as human nature is what it is— It's wrong maybe but what can you do about it? I mean girls like that one you—girls there's something doing with—and lots of 'em are pretty and it's human nature if you— But that doesn't mean to ever get mixed up with them seriously! You just have what you want and pay 'em and forget it I know that sounds hard and unfeeling but we're talking facts and— But don't think I'm encouraging you to— If you can stay away from 'em all the better—but if—why—hmm— Here's what I'm driving at Richard They're apt to be whitened sepulchres—I mean your whole life might be ruined if—so darn it you've got to know how to—I mean there are ways and means— (*Suddenly he can go no farther and winds up helplessly*) But hell I suppose you boys talk all this over among yourselves and you know more about it than I do

I'll admit I'm no authority I never had anything to do with such women and it'll be a hell of a lot better for you if you never do!

RICHARD (*without looking at him*) I'm never going to Pa (*Then shocked indignation coming into his voice*) I don't see how you could think I could—now—when you know I love Muriel and am going to marry her I'd die before I'd—!

MILLER (*immensely relieved—enthusiastically*) That's the talk! By God I'm proud of you when you talk like that! (*Then hastily*) And now that's all of that There's nothing more to say and we'll forget it eh?

RICHARD (*after a pause*) How are you going to punish me Pa?

MILLER I was sort of forgetting that wasn't I? Well I'd thought of telling you you couldn't go to Yale—

RICHARD (*eagerly*) Don't I have to go? Gee that's great! Muriel thought you'd want me to I was telling her I'd rather you gave me a job on the paper because then she and I could get married sooner (*Then with a boyish grin*) Gee Pa you picked a lemon That isn't any punishment You'll have to do something besides that

MILLER (*grimly—but only half concealing an answering grin*) Then you'll go to Yale and you'll stay there till you graduate that's the answer to that! Muriel's got good sense and you haven't! (*RICHARD accepts this philosophically*) And now we're finished you better call your mother (*RICHARD opens the screen door and calls Ma and a moment later she comes in She glances quickly from son to husband and immediately knows that all is well and tactfully refrains from all questions*)

MRS MILLER My it's a beautiful night The moon's way down low—almost setting (*She sits in her chair and sighs contentedly* RICHARD remains standing by the door staring out at the moon his face pale in the moonlight)

MILLER (*with a nod at RICHARD winking at his wife*) Yes I don't believe I've hardly ever seen such a beautiful night—with such a wonderful moon Have you Richard?

RICHARD (*turning to them—enthusiastically*) No! It was wonderful—down at the beach— (*He stops abruptly smiling shyly*)

MILLER (*watching his son—after a pause—quietly*) I can only remember a few nights that were as beautiful as this—and they were so long ago when your mother and I were young and planning to get married

RICHARD (*stares at him wonderingly for a moment then quickly from his father to his mother and back again strangely as if he'd never seen them before—then he looks almost disgusted and swallows as if an acrid taste had come into his mouth—but*

then suddenly his face is transfigured by a smile of shy understanding and sympathy. He speaks shyly) Yes, I'll bet those must have been wonderful nights too. You sort of forget the moon was the same way back then—and everything.

MILLER (*hushily*) You're all right, Richard. (He gets up and blows his nose.)

MRS. MILLER (*fondly*) You're a good boy, Richard. (Richard looks dreadfully shy and embarrassed at this. His father comes to his rescue.)

MILLER Better get to bed early tonight, Son, hadn't you?

RICHARD I couldn't sleep. Can't I go out on the piazza and sit for a while—until the moon sets?

MILLER All right. Then you better say good night now. I don't know about your mother, but I'm going to bed right away. I'm dead tired.

MRS. MILLER So am I.

RICHARD (*goes to her and kisses her*) Good night, Ma.

MRS. MILLER Good night. Don't you stay up till all hours now.

RICHARD (*comes to his father and stands awkwardly before him*) Good night, Pa.

MILLER (*puts his arm around him and gives him a hug*) Good night, Richard. (Richard turns impulsively and kisses him—then hurries out the screen door. MILLER stares after him—then says huskily) First time he's done that in years. I don't believe in kissing between fathers and sons after a certain age—seems mushy and silly—but that meant something! And I don't think we'll ever have to worry about his being safe—from himself—again. And I guess no matter what life will do to him, he can take care of it now. (*He sighs with satisfaction and sitting down in his chair begins to unlace his shoes*) My darned feet are giving me fits!

MRS. MILLER (*laughing*) Why do you bother unlacing your shoes now, you big goose—when we're going right up to bed?

MILLER (*as if he hadn't thought of that before stops*) Guess you're right. (*Then getting to his feet—with a grin*) Mind if I don't say my prayers to night, Essie? I'm certain God knows I'm too darned tired.

MRS. MILLER Don't talk that way. It's real sinful. (*She gets up—then laughing fondly*) If that isn't you all over! Always looking for an excuse to—You're worse than Tommy! But all right, I suppose tonight you needn't. You've had a hard day. (*She puts her hand on the reading lamp switch*) I'm going to turn out the light. All ready?

MILLER Yep. Let her go, Gallagher. (*She turns out the lamp. In the ensuing darkness the faint moonlight shines full in through the screen door. Walking together toward the front parlor they stand full in it for a moment, looking out. MILLER puts his*

arm around her. He says in a low voice) There he is—like a statue of Love's Young Dream. (*Then he sighs and speaks with a gentle nostalgic melancholy*) What's it that Rubaiyat says?

Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!  
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!

(*Then throwing off his melancholy with a loving smile at her*) Well, Spring isn't everything, is it, Essie? There's a lot to be said for Autumn. That's got beauty too. And Winter—if you're together.

MRS. MILLER (*simply*) Yes, Nat. (*She kisses him and they move quietly out of the moonlight back into the darkness of the front parlor*)

CURTAIN

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What differences in style, tone, and attitude toward the subject matter of the plays do you find between the Goldsmith and Wilde comedies and O'Neill's play?
2. Are the characters of *Ah, Wilderness!* presented realistically? Or do you feel they are sentimentalized?
3. What is the central theme of the play? Does it compare with the main themes of *She Stoops to Conquer* and *An Ideal Husband*?
4. What is the purpose of the Lily Sid subplot? How does it enhance the main theme of the play?
5. Are there any indications in the text that O'Neill occasionally spoofs his characters?
6. In the long run, however, does O'Neill's attitude toward his theme and his characters waver?



## Some Elements of Comedy

Comedy does not lend itself easily to analysis. It is an attitude of mind, a way of looking at things, a spirit. Stage comedy resides not so much in the lines of the play as between the lines. It cannot really be set down on paper, and we are particularly dependent for its success on the skill of the actors. We must notice their every gesture, their tone of voice, their posturings, their pauses, and their silences for these are the clues to comedy on the stage. The staging of comedy must strike the right note from the very outset and maintain it throughout; one note falsely struck, and the whole delicately constructed

and nicely poised structure falls to pieces. The comic style keeps the world together—a world quite independent of our own with its own laws and customs and its own reality separated from the real world by the integument of its style. Not our world nor of it, the world of comedy yet throws its light and warmth on ours and its range is greater than that of tragedy, for here—in the satire of Aristophanes the bawdy of the New Comedy the grace of Shakespeare the wit of Congreve the humanity of Molière the bite of Shaw the compassion of Chaplin the lowliness of the Marx brothers—here is man at his ease if not in Zion then at least in himself.

For all this difficulty of analysis however, let us see if we cannot apply to comedy the same technique which we used to understand tragedy and we can do this if we think of tragedy and comedy as the opposite sides of the same coin. We have already pointed out that both tragedy and comedy seek the same end—the purgation of evil—but the evil purged in tragedy is pride while the evil purged in comedy is pretense. In the one man's folly is depicted in the other his foibles. Comedy does not, therefore directly concern itself with matters of gravest import but it can and does dart at them with light arrows of wit and laughter. Yet behind its façade of humor there is a solid core of seriousness for comedy like tragedy requires a set of values against which it can be played. Without his values Aristophanes shafts directed against Euripides would be pointless without his values Shaw's barbs thrown at our social system would have no force. But these values of comedy are essentially those of tragedy though stated in different terms. Tragedy places these values on the cold heights comedy infuses them with warmth tragedy elevates man to what he should be comedy jolles him into what he can be tragedy purges man by means of pity and terror comedy purges him by means of laughter and compassion, tragedy deals with man in larger than life images comedy rests comfortably on the human plane. In tragedy man falls from terrifying heights to a terrible end and in comedy he falls too but only a short distance just enough to shock but not enough to destroy and he falls cushioned by our sympathy and smiles. Both tragedy and comedy save. There but for the grace of God go I but they say it in two very different tones of voice—one forced out of us by the terror of the abyss suddenly opened at our feet the other springing to our lips at the neatness of our escape. In that difference of tone lies the measure of the difference between tragedy and comedy.

Let us now examine the protagonists of the three comedies included here. In *She Stoops to Conquer* the protagonist is Marlow in *An Ideal Husband* Viscount Goring, and in *Ah Wilderness!* Richard

Miller. But each of these male protagonists has a female counterpart: Marlow—Miss Hardcastle Lord Goring—Miss Mabel Chiltern Richard Miller—his youthful dreams symbolized by Muriel McComber. And they are all young spirited and in love. Love and the relation between the sexes—a relation explored with good humor in *She Stoops to Conquer* with wit in *An Ideal Husband* and with sentiment in *Ah Wilderness!*—love and the relationship between the sexes though not the absolutely indispensable elements of comedy are for the most part its largest and most attractive stock in trade. Youth and love are closely related to the comic spirit they create an atmosphere in which it likes to flourish, and they cast over comedy an aura of sentiment sex and satisfaction. Our three comedies take full advantage of this spell of good feeling the heroes and heroines are all young good looking and comfortably placed in society and their only obstacles are those which are ordinarily found in the path of true love for anything more serious than that would destroy the texture of comedy. Not that serious matters are absent from the comedies after all Hardcastle is grievously hurt by Marlow's scorn Sir Robert Chiltern is in a most dangerous predicament and Richard exposed to worldly temptation may go the way of Sid. But these dark matters serve only to bring out more clearly the light of comedy and we know in advance that they will be overcome after all Harold Lloyd never was never could be hurt in any of his escapades.

The three young men are put through their paces in fairly much the same way. Each is purged of his vanity Marlow of his conceit Lord Goring of his pose and Richard of his posturing. And in each, though in varying degrees the instrument of the comic catharsis is woman for in comedy woman is the vessel of the comic spirit since she has the eye which pierces the pretense. She is the surgeon with the wit to cut and the grace to cure. The three lovers are separated from their ladies by the slightest of obstacles Marlow and Miss Hardcastle by the mistake in identity Viscount Goring and Miss Chiltern by the misapprehension of Goring's true character and Richard and Muriel by unromantic elders. But their encounters with these obstacles are designed only to hinder and not to hurt and the suffering they occasion is just strong enough to sting the protagonists to change for the goodness of character of the protagonists is immediately below the surface of their pretense and needs nothing sharper to reveal them in their best light.

Since comedy exposes the gap between man as he pretends to be and man as he is the vanities of the other characters in the plays are far from neglected indeed, in contrast the comic protagonist is let off rather lightly, the comic spirit but flicking at him



without scaring him. So Miss Haidcastle unseats Marlow from his high horse. Miss Chiltem comes to understand the nobility of Lord Goring's character and young Richard looks in but does not fall in the pit of temptation. At the same time Miss Haidcastle's stewardship, Sir Robert Chiltem's hypocrisy, Lady Chiltem's excessive high-mindedness and David McComber's small-mindedness are brought to trial. These excesses of character having been exposed are thereby vicariously purged from us as the spectators of them. Just as we expiate our *hybris* by vicarious suffering in tragedy so do we rid ourselves of our pretenses by vicarious ridicule in comedy. The fault not being as great as that in tragedy does not require as severe a punishment and we are therefore cleansed by laughter and not by tears. Comedy like tragedy restores the balance of forces within the nature of man by our participation in the representation on the stage. By acting out the evil and the pretense in ourselves we get rid of them and we are made the better for it. Both tragedy and comedy agree in this that there is good in man to be brought out. This good may be stopped up for a while by evil or pretense but once we allow ourselves to be purged of these by vicarious suffering we emerge cleansed and good. One *does* feel better for having gone to the theatre. For as Nat Miller says: "Then from all reports we seem to be completely surrounded by love!"



# The Meanings of Comedy

*Wylie Sypher*

Wylie Sypher is at present Professor of English, Chairman of the Language, Literature and Arts Division, and Dean of the Graduate Division of Simmons College in Boston. His offices reflect his interests; he has written extensively on English literature, notably his critical anthology of eighteenth century English literature, *Enlightened England*, and he has worked as well on the relations between art and literature, culminating in his extremely provocative *Four Stages of Renaissance Style*, one of the most successful efforts to relate art and literature to each other available to the student of this most vexing problem. The essay on comedy serves as an appendix to two papers edited by Professor Sypher, Bergson on *Laughter* and Meredith on *Comedy*. In this essay

Professor Sypher makes use of all the resources now open to the student of literature: psychoanalysis, anthropology, the new approach to the classics and myth and ritual studies. The result is a richly illuminating analysis of the many modes and meanings of comedy.

## I Our New Sense of the Comic

DOUBTLESS Meredith and Bergson were alike weighed by the heavy moralizings of the nineteenth century with its terrific tonnage and thus sought relief in comedy of manners. For both really confine their idea of comedy within the range of comedy of manners and they have given us our finest, most sensitive theory of that form. Comedy says Bergson, is a game—a game that imitates life. And in writing the introduction to *The Egoist*, Meredith thinks of this game as dealing with human nature in the drawing room where we have no dust of the struggling outer world, no mire, no violent crashes. The aftertaste of laughter may be bitter. Bergson grants but comedy is itself only a slight revolt on the surface of social life. Its gaiety happens like froth along a beach for comedy looks at man from the outside. It will go no farther.

For us today comedy goes a great deal further—as it did for the ancients with their cruel sense of the comic. Indeed to appreciate Bergson and Meredith we must see them both in a new perspective now that we have lived amid the dust and crashes of the twentieth century and have learned how the direst calamities that befall man seem to prove that human life at its depths is inherently absurd. The comic and the tragic views of life no longer exclude each other. Perhaps the most important discovery in modern criticism is the perception that comedy and tragedy are somehow akin, or that comedy can tell us many things about our situation even tragedy cannot. At the heart of the nineteenth century Dos toevsky discovered this and Søren Kierkegaard spoke as a modern man when he wrote that the comic and the tragic touch one another at the absolute point of infinity—at the extremes of human experience that is. Certainly they touch one another in the naive art of Paul Klee whose little scrawls tell the ridiculous suffering of modern man. Klee adopts the child's drawing because there is a painful wisdom in the hobgoblin laughter of children.

The more helpless they are the more instructive are the examples they offer us. The features of modern man whose soul is torn with alarm are to be seen in Klee's daemonic etching *Perseus The Triumph of Wit Over Suffering*, of which the artist himself said: "A laugh is mingled with the deep lines of pain and finally gains the upper hand. It reduces to absurdity the unmingled suffering of the

Gorgon's head added at the side. The face is without nobility—the skull shorn of its serpentine adornment except for one ludicrous remnant. In our sculpture too the image of modern man is reduced to absurdity—in for example Giacometti's figures, worn thin to naked nerve patterns and racked by loneliness.

Our comedy of manners is a sign of desperation. Kafka's novels are a ghastly comedy of manners showing how the awkward and hopelessly maladroit hero, K, is inexorably an outsider struggling vainly somehow to belong to an order that is impregnable closed by some inscrutable authority. Kafka transforms comedy of manners to pathos by looking or feeling from the angle of the alien soul. He treats comedy of manners from the point of view of Dostoevsky's underground man and his heroes are absurd because their efforts are all seen from below and from within. In his notebooks Kafka described the anxiety with which his characters try to bear up under a perpetual judgment life passes upon them.

Watching, fearing, hoping, the answer steals round the question, peers despairingly in her enigmatic face follows her through the maddest paths that is the paths leading farthest away from the answer. Kafka is a modern Jeremiah laughing in feverish merriment, prophetically writing the incredible—the depraved—comedy of our concentration camps which are courts where the soul of contemporary man undergoes an absurd Trial by Ordeal. His comedy reaches the stage of the mariculate as tragedy does when Lear frets about the button.

Our new appreciation of the comic grows from the confusion in modern consciousness which has been sadly wounded by the politics of power bringing with it the ravage of explosion, the atrocious pain of inquisitions, the squalor of labor camps and the efficiency of big lies. Wherever man has been able to think about his present plight he has felt the suction of the absurd. He has been forced to see himself in unheroic positions. In his sanest moments the modern hero is aware that he is J. Alfred Prufrock or Osric, an attendant lord—Almost at times, the Fool. Or else Sweeney, the apeneck seeking low pleasures while death and the raven drift above.

We have, in short, been forced to admit that the absurd is more than ever inherent in human existence—that is the irrational, the inexplicable, the surprising, the nonsensical—in other words, the comic. One of the evidences of the absurd is our dissociation of sensibility, with the ironic lack of relation between one feeling and another and the artist now must as Eliot once said, accept the chaos which serves for our life span the unstable consciousness of the ordinary man. The latter falls in love or reads Spinoza and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise

of the typewriter or the smell of cooking. The fragmentary lives we live are an existential comedy like the intense schizoid lives of Dostoevsky's characters. In *The Brothers Karamazov* Ivan says: Let me tell you that the absurd is only too necessary on earth. The world stands on absurdities and perhaps nothing would have come to pass without them. In our modern experiences the ethical golden mean seems to have broken down and man is left face to face with the preposterous, the trivial, the monstrous, the inconceivable. The modern hero lives amid unreconcilables which as Dostoevsky suggests can be encompassed only by religious faith—or comedy.

The sense of the absurd is at the root of our characteristic philosophy—existentialism. The existential religious hero is Kierkegaard who wrote: In truth no age has so fallen victim to the comic as this. Kierkegaard, like Kafka, finds that the comical is present in every stage of life for wherever there is life there is contradiction and wherever there is contradiction the comical is present. Kierkegaard's highest comedy is the comedy of faith since the religious man is the one who knows by his very existence that there is an endless yawning difference between God and man and yet he has the infinite obsessive passion to devote himself to God, who is all whereas man is nothing. Without God man does not exist thus the more thoroughly and substantially a human being exists the more he will discover the comical. Finite man must take the full risk of encountering an infinite God. Existence itself the act of existing is a striving and is both pathetic and comic in the same degree. Faith begins with a sense of the discrepancy, the contradiction between the infinite and the finite, the eternal and that which becomes. So the highest form of comedy is that the infinite may move within a man, and no one, no one be able to discover it through anything appearing outwardly. The earnestness of one's faith is tested by one's sensitiveness to the comical for God is all and man is nothing, and man must come to terms with God. If one exists as a human being he must be hypersensitive to the absurd, and the most absurd contradiction of all is that man must risk everything without insurance against losing everything. This is precisely what ordinary Christians refuse to do. Kierkegaard finds they wish to find a safe way to salvation, to find God without being tormented, and to base their faith on what is probable, reasonable, assured. This is itself ludicrous—the despicable comedy of Christendom which requires religion to be comforting and tranquilizing. Even in his religious life man is always being confronted with the extreme hazard in the guise of the absurd.

This sense of having to live amid the irrational, the ludicrous, the disgusting or the perilous has

been dramatized by the existentialists and it has also been boldly exploited by propagandists and those who seize power by using the big lie that most cynical form of modern political comedy. For all our science we have been living through an age of Unreason and have learned to submit to the improbable if not to the Absurd. And comedy is in Guitier's words a logic of the absurd.

In his notebooks Kafka explained that he wanted to exaggerate situations until everything becomes clear. Dostoevsky has this sort of comic clarity—a frightening clarity of the grotesque reducing life as totally as tragedy by means of a perspective that foreshortens everything to absurdity. From this perspective which is often Goya's or Picasso's man looks puppetlike and his struggles diminish to pathos. For example in the closing pages of *The Brothers Karamazov* when Ilusha is buried Snegiryov runs distracted about the corpse of his boy strewn with flowers on the coffin scattering morsels of bread for sparrows on the little grave. These scenes cause a laughter so raw that it brings grimaces hardly to be distinguished from tragic response. The force of this comic shock is like the qualm stirred by tragedy; it can disorient us, disturb us as confusingly as tragic calamity. Melville's tormented Captain Ahab sets his course headlong outward driven on by the modern delight in foundering. Like Conrad's character Kurtz he is a madman in the grip of merciless logic for a futile purpose. We are now more sensitive to these absurd calamities than to tragic recognitions. We appreciate Rouault who sees man as a Clown. In its style Picasso's giant *Guernica*, that premonition of total war is a shocking comic strip in black and white showing how the ridiculous journalese of painting can be an idiom for modern art.

*Guernica* is like a bad dream and Kafka's novels are nightmares. The dream is nonsensical and free, having none of the logic and sobriety of our waking selves; the very incongruity of the dream world is comic. Freud interprets the dream and the jest as a discharge of powerful psychic energies, a glimpse into the abyss of the self. We have learned to read our dreams to tell us what we really are for we now find that the patterns of our conscious life have meanings that can be explained only by looking below them into the chaos of the unconscious life always there, old, irrational, and articulate except in the language of the sleeping self when, as Banquo warned Macbeth, the instruments of darkness tell us truths. By exploiting the dream, surrealism plays the comedy of modern art, and psychoanalysis plays the comedy of modern medical practice.

Freud is not the only one to suggest that the joke, like the dream, is an upsurge from the unconscious, a mechanism for releasing powerful archaic impulses

always there below the level of reason.<sup>1</sup> The caricaturist and the masters of grotesque art have long employed a kind of dreamwork charged with the spell of mania like medieval gargoyles or paintings by Bosch and Gruenewald where there is fiendish zest in wracking man's body. Expressionist art has always been one of the most potent forms of caricature whether it be paintings by Van Gogh and Kokoschka or Michelangelo's unfinished sculptures. The caricaturist and expressionist use comic distortions that often are the overstatements of a soul shaken by neurosis. Long before Di Chirico and Yves Tanguy painted their dream-fantasies Bergson guessed that comic automatism resembles the automatism of the dream. *L'absurde comique est de même nature que celle des rêves*, Bergson adds.

Whenever the comic personage mechanically holds his idea, he ends by thinking, speaking, acting as if he dreamed. Surrealism is dream play (*les jeux du rêve*) since the surrealist painter represents the involuntary free associations of the hidden life which have their own absurdity and improbability. As Bergson remarked psychological automatism is as comic as the physical automatism of gesture. Dickens is the great artist of physical automatism with his Uriah Heeps and his Mrs. Gamp. Molière is not the only great artist of psychological automatism for Dostoevsky's split characters have the mechanism of surrealist art. His people move as we do in dreams by involuntary impulses; they make psychological gestures. Surrealism surprises us with the *imprevu*, the unexpected psychic gesture controlled by the Id.

Thus the comic gesture reaches down toward the Unconscious, that dim world usually assigned to tragedy, the midnight terrain where Macbeth met the witches. The joke and the dream incongruously distort the logic of our rational life. The joke and the dream are interruptions in the pattern of our consciousness. So also possibly is any truly creative work of art a form of interruption of our normal patterns or designs of seeing and speaking which are mere formulas written on the surface layer of the mind. Underneath this surface layer is the pattern-free (non-Gestalt) activity of the unconscious, undisciplined self which cannot be expressed by the forms consciousness imposes on our vision and thought. The deepest meanings of art therefore arise wherever there is an interplay between the patterns of surface perception and the pressures of depth perception. Then the stated meanings will fringe off into unstated and unstatable meanings of great power felt dimly but compellingly. Behind the trim scaffolding of artistic form and logic there whispers for a moment, the wild voice of the unconscious self—using the disturbed language of the dream and the jest as well as the language of trag-

edy This uncivilized but knowing self Nietzsche once called Dionysian the self that feels archaic pleasure and archaic pain The substratum of the world of art Nietzsche says is the terrible wisdom of Silenus and Silenus is the satyr god of comedy leading the ecstatic chorus of natural beings who as it were live ineradicably behind every civilization The confused statements of the dream and the joke are intolerable to the daylight, sane Apollonian self

No doubt the tragic experience reaches deeply down into the interruptions of conscious life conjuring up our grim disinherited selves and expressing the formless intimations of archaic fear and archaic struggle But in an artist like Dostoevsky the comic experience can reach as deeply down perhaps because the comic artist begins by accepting the absurd the improbable in human existence Therefore he has less resistance than the tragic artist to representing what seems incoherent and inexplicable and thus lowers the threshold of artistic perception After all comedy not tragedy admits the disorderly into the realm of art the grotesque depends upon an irrational focus Ours is a century of disorder and irrationalism

Is it any wonder that along with our wars our machines and our neuroses we should find new meanings in comedy, or that comedy should represent our plight better than tragedy? For tragedy needs the noble and nowadays we seldom can assign any usable meaning to nobility The comic now is more relevant or at least more accessible than the tragic As Mephisto explains to God one cannot understand man unless one is able to laugh For man must strive and striving he must err

Man has been defined as a social animal a tool making animal a speaking animal a thinking animal a religious animal He is also a laughing animal (Mallarmé takes the archaic smile in sculpture as a sign man has become aware of his soul) Yet this definition of man is the obscurest of all for we do not really know what laughter is or what causes it Though he calls his essay *Laughter* Bergson never plumbs this problem We have never agreed about the motives mechanism or even the temper of laughter Usually the Greeks laughed to express a disdain roused by seeing someone's mischance deformity or ugliness One of the least agreeable scenes in classical literature is the cruel casual slaying of wretched Dolon a Trojan spy caught skulking one night by Diomedes and Ulysses near the Greek camp after tormenting Dolon with a hunt he can save his life the gleeful Ulysses smiling no doubt an archaic smile, watches Diomedes strike off the head of their captive green with fear There is also scandalous Homeric mirth among the Olympians

themselves when lame Hephaistos calls the gods together to ridicule his wife Aphrodite lying tapped with brazen Ares god of war To be laughed at by the ancients was to be defiled

Malice however is only one of the many obscure motives for laughing which has been explained as a release from restraint a response to what is incongruous or improper or a sign of ambivalence—our hysteric effort to adjust our repulsion from and our attraction to a situation Certainly laughter is a symptom of bewilderment or surprise Sometimes it is said that a laugh detonates whenever there is a sudden rupture between thinking and feeling<sup>2</sup> The rupture occurs the instant a situation is seen in another light The shock of taking another point of view causes in Bergson's words a momentary anæsthesia of the heart

During the Middle Ages people seem to have laughed at the grotesque as when for instance Chretien de Troyes brings among the dainty knights and ladies of his romance *Yvain* a rustic lout whose ears were big and mossy just like an elephant's or when Dante's gargoyllike demons caper through the lower circles of hell making obscene noises In pious legends like *The Tumbler of Our Lady* medieval laughter is charitable becoming almost tender in anecdotes about Filar Juniper that tattered soul who in meekness and humility played seesaw with children

Renaissance laughter was complex Sometimes it was like Cellini's swaggering with contempt—*sprezzatura* When Machiavelli laughs he almost sneers notably in his play *Mandragola* showing how a stupid old husband is cuckolded We can fancy that his Prince would laugh somewhat like a Borgia Then there is Erasmus satire quiet and blighting less boisterous than Rabelais monstrous glee Ben Jonson's plays ridicule the classic bourgeois types (as Bergson would call them) who like Rabelais mammoths are laughable because they have an excess of one humor in their disposition or complexion Shakespeare's theatre is filled with medically humorous persons like Falstaff who raise a laugh at once brutal loving and wise The laughter in Cervantes *Quixote* is gentler and more thoughtful and not so corrosive as Hamlet's wit which is tinged with Robert Burton's melancholy

Hamlet's disturbed laughter was very modern as was also the strained joyless grimace of Thomas Hobbes who explained laughter as a sense of sudden glory arising from our feeling of superiority whenever we see ourselves triumphantly secure while others stumble Hobbes brings in the note of biological laughter for he takes life to be a struggle for power waged naturally in a brutish combat where every man is enemy to every man Some

three hundred years later Anthony M. Ludovici paraphrased Hobbes's theory in Darwinian form by supposing that a laugh is man's way of showing his fangs.<sup>3</sup> And man needs like any animal to show his fangs only when he is threatened: we laugh in self-defense and bare our teeth to recruit our sinking spirits or to ease our aching sense of inferiority or danger. Laughter is a tactic for survival, a mark of superior adaptation among gregarious animals. The weak and the savage both laugh. Ludovici agrees with Nietzsche that man laughs only because he can suffer excruciatingly and his direst most inward sickness is the thwarting of his will.

On this latter theme we can play every variation of modern comedy with all its satanic ironies and romantic dreamwork. The genial romantics of the early nineteenth century assumed with Charles Lamb that laughter is an overflow of sympathy, an amiable feeling of identity with what is disreputably human, a relish for the whimsical, the odd, the private blunder. Carlyle (of all people!) cheerfully supposed that the man who smiles is affectionate. But there were the diabolic romantics too, driven by the Will to Power or consumed by their own poisons, and they laughed menacingly, frantically. Baudelaire's laugh, heard in the dark bohemian world of Paris—the Paris which drove men desperate and betrayed their ideals—is a nervous convulsion, an involuntary spasm, a proof of man's fallen state.<sup>4</sup> The feverish laugh of Baudelaire's hero sears his lips and twists his vitals: it is a sign of infinite nobility and infinite pain. Man laughed only after the Exile, when he knew sin and suffering: the comical is a mark of man's revolt, boredom, and aspiration. The laugh is satanic; it is likewise deeply human. It is the bitter voice of nineteenth-century disillusion. Schopenhauer was the first to define the romantic irony in this desolate laugh of the underground man: laughter is simply the sudden perception of incongruity between our ideals and the actualities before us. Byron jested: And if I laugh at any mortal thing / 'Tis that I may not weep.

The myth of the disenchanted and frustrated idealist, frenzied by his sense of the impassable distance between what might be and what is, reaches its shrillest pitch in Nietzsche: the scorpion philosopher, exempt from every middle-class code, whose revolt is unlike Bergson's comedy of slight revolt on the surface of social life. Savage Nietzsche is able to transvalue all social values by pure disgust and fury. This sickly laughter of the last romantics is the most confused and destructive mirth Western man has ever allowed himself. It has all the pessimism which Bergson chose not to consider. Rimbaud's laugh is a symptom of anguish and a glimpse into the abyss of the self. It is a terrifying scorn, a shameless ex-

pense of lust, an eruption of the pleasure principle in a world where pleasure is denied. Nietzsche's laughter is a discharge far more possessed than the Freudian sexual release.

So Bergson's analysis of laughter is incomplete, which may explain why he thinks comedy works only from the outside. Comedy may in fact not bring laughter at all, and certain tragedies may make us laugh hysterically. It was Shelley who found the comedy in *King Lear* to be universal, ideal and sublime. Ben Jonson himself noted: Nor is the moving of laughter always the end of comedy. When Coleridge lectured on *Hamlet* and *Lear* he pointed out that terror is closely joined with what is ludicrous, since the laugh is rendered by nature itself the language of extremes, even as tears are. Thus *Hamlet* will be found to touch on the verge of the ludicrous, because laughter is equally the expression of extreme anguish and horror as of joy. The grimace of mirth resembles the grimace of suffering; comic and tragic masks have the same distortion. Today we know that a comic action sometimes yields tragic values.<sup>5</sup> In Balzac's *human comedy* (*Comédie humaine*) we meet Old Goriot and Cousin Pons, those heroes of misery.

If we have no satisfactory definition of laughter, neither do we have any satisfactory definition of comedy. Indeed, most of the theories of laughter and comedy fail precisely because they oversimplify a situation and an art more complicated than the tragic situation and art. Comedy seems to be a more pervasive human condition than tragedy. Often we are, or have been, or could be Quixotes or Micawbers or Malvolios, Benedicks or Tartuffes. Seldom are we Macbeths or Othellos. Tragedy, not comedy, limits its field of operation and is a more closely regulated form of response to the ambiguities and dilemmas of humanity. The comic action touches experience at more points than tragic action. We can hardly hope that our various definitions of comedy will be more compatible than our definitions of laughter, yet each of the many definitions has its use in revealing the meanings of comedy. Bergson's alone will not suffice, or Meredith's either, and they both will mean more when seen against the full spectrum of comic values.

Ordinarily we refer to high and low comedy, but we cannot speak of low tragedy. All tragedy ought to be high. There are, of course, various orders of tragic action, such as *drame* and heroic tragedy, however, as tragedy falls away from its high plane it tends to become something else than tragedy. Tragedy is indeed an achievement peculiarly Greek—and needs a special view of man's relation to the world.<sup>6</sup> But comedy thrives everywhere and fearlessly runs the gamut of effects from

high to low without diminishing its force or surrendering its values or even jeopardizing them. Once Mme de Staël said: Tragedies (if we set aside some of the masterpieces) require less knowledge of the human heart than comedies. What a strange opinion! Yet which of Shakespeare's plays really shows a more profound knowledge of the hearts of fathers and children? *Lear*, or *Henry IV*, 1 and 2 and *Henry V*? Is not the crisis luridly overstated in *Lear* and met with greater insight in the figures of Henry IV, Hal, Hotspur and Falstaff? Can we honestly claim that Shakespeare reveals more about life in the tragedy of *Lear* than in the conflicts between Henry and his wild son? Are not many of the problems raised in the great tragedies solved in the great comedies?

Mme de Staël continues: The imagination without much difficulty can represent what often appears—the features of sorrow. Tragic characters take on a certain similarity that blurs the finer distinctions between them and the design of a heroic action determines in advance the course they must take. (Whereas Bergson claims it is comedy that deals with types.) Surely the comic action is more unpredictable and delight is an emotion quite as individual as grief, remorse or guilt.

Further and illogically, low comedy is as legitimate as high. In fact, the lower the range the more authentic the comedy may be, as we know when we behold the Wife of Bath, that slack daughter of Eve or Falstaff that ruffian always on the point of untrussing. At the bottom of the comic scale—where the human becomes nearly indistinguishable from the animal and where the vibration of laughter is longest and loudest—is the dirty joke or the dirty gesture. At this depth comedy unerringly finds the lowest common denominator of human response, the reducing agent that sends us reeling back from our proprieties to the realm of old Pan. The unquenchable vitality of man gushes up from the lower strata of Rabelais' comedy inhabited by potbellied monsters who tumultuously do as they wish in a world built entirely with the apparatus of a gargantuan pedagogy. There we drop the mask which we have composed into the features of our decent, cautious selves. Rabelais strips man of his breeches: he is the moral *sans culotte*. Psychologists tell us that any group of men and women, no matter how refined, will sooner or later laugh at a dirty joke, the question being not whether they will laugh but when or at precisely what dirty joke, that is, under exactly what coefficient of stress a code of decency breaks apart and allows the human being to fall steeply down to the recognition of his inalienable flesh.

Yet laughter at the obscenest jest forever divides man from animal because the animal is never self-

conscious about any fleshly act whatever whereas man is not man without being somehow uneasy about the nastiness of his body. One of the deepest paradoxes in comedy thus reveals itself in obscenity which is a threshold over which man enters into the human condition, it is a comic equivalent to the religious state of original sin or of tragic error and man may as justly be thought human because of his sense of what is dirty as because of his sense of what is evil, sinful or fearful. This elemental self-awareness—this consciousness of shame at one's flesh—sets one of the lowest margins for civilization and conversely a hypersensitivity to what is obscene is a mark of a decadent society. The paradox in comic filth was madly intensified in the satire of Jonathan Swift that puritan pornographer who wrote in his notebook that: A nice man is a man of nasty ideas. Swift forces comic obscenity to its extremes in Gulliver's disgust at the Yahoos: his fastidiousness is insane when Gulliver is frightened by the red-haired female Yahoo who stands gazing and howling on the bank, inflamed with desire to embrace his naked body.

As we move up the scale of comic action, the mechanisms become more complex but no more comic. Physical mishaps, pratfalls and loud collisions are the crudest products of Bergson's comic automatism. It is hard to distinguish these pleasures from our glee at physical deformity and here we detect the cruelty inherent in comedy which may perhaps be another form of the cruelty inherent in tragic disaster. Essentially our enjoyment of physical mishap or deformity springs from our surprise and delight that man's motions are often absurd, his energies often misdirected. This is the coarsest, most naive comedy of manners. Another sort of mechanical comedy is the farce—mistaken identities, comic denunciations, mistimings—which can be a very complicated engine of plot devices. In this range of comedy the characters need only be puppets moved from the outside as events require. There is the right key to the wrong door, or the wrong key to the right door and it does not matter very much who is inside provided it is the unexpected figure. In these comic vehicles fate takes the guise of happy or unhappy chance which is of course only a tidy arrangement of improbable possibilities. On this sort of artificial framework comedy displays some of its most glittering designs.

Or comedy can be a mechanism of language, the repartee that sharply levels drama and life to a sheen of verbal wit. Congreve's cool, negligent persons like Fainall are beings who have a verbal existence of extremely delicate taste and able to refine all their pleasures to raillery. I'd no more play with a man that slighted his ill fortune than I'd make love to a woman who undervalued the loss of her reputation.



The transparent Mrs Fainall lives and moves in the same dry atmosphere and speaks with the same brittle tongue. While I only hated my husband I could bear to see him but since I have despised him he's too offensive. Such comedy of manners does not hesitate to sacrifice humanity to dialogue. Or rather the dialogue itself may be a fragile mechanism of wit to elevate the comedy to intellectual heights. Shakespeare's intricate wit in *Loves Labour's Lost* with its flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention demands of us an agility that makes the brain spin. The play is a thin fabric of banter dazzling us with preciosity, its quick venue of phrase—snip snap and home. At its gilded moments this comedy feeds upon dainties, delights to drink ink, to eat paper to replenish the spirit with joy, to come to honorable terms with a code of manners, and to leave tudging far behind those who are sensible only in the duller parts.

But it is more than a paterre of devices: it is a drama played by those odd, lovable Shakespearean creatures for whom Bergson seems to have so little feeling—they are characters in the British sense of the word. Berowne and Don Armado are among them and they inhabit the higher domain of comedy where we meet Fielding's Squire Western, Chaucer's Monk, Cervantes' Quixote, Sterne's Uncle Toby, and Dickens' Sam Weller. Such persons cannot exist in the dry seclusion of farce. They require the mellow neighborhood of a comedy of humors which gathers into its action spirits of strong and perverse disposition and convincing weight. These characters thrive at more genial latitudes than Ben Jonson allowed them in his comedy of humors which was too harshly satiric. English literature is, as Taine said, the native province of these unruly creatures whose life blood pulses richly, whose features are odd, and whose opinions, gestures, vices, and habits control the mechanism of the plot in which they happen to be cast. Indeed, such dispositions may temper the whole climate in which events happen and constantly threaten to wreck the tight logic of a fiction. Mercutio and Benedick are incorrigible fellows of this sort. We never take seriously the action in which they have a role but we take them seriously. They live for us as Falstaff lives for Falstaff is more than a sack of guts. He moves the whole play from within, he is a temperament as well as an anatomical grotesque.

These characters realized in depth stand at the threshold of high comedy which is really a transformation of comedy of manners. Whenever a society becomes self-conscious about its opinions, codes, or etiquette, comedy of manners may serve as a sort of philosophic engine called comedy of ideas. Frail as they are and known best in their moments of raillery, Millamant and Mirabell raise Congreve's

*Way of the World* to a bolder order of comedy of manners. Let us say Millamant to Mirabell be as strange as if we had been married a great while and as well bred as if we were not married at all. The edge of this comedy is sharpened by sanity as well as verbal wit and as Meredith clearly saw, Molière magnified comedy of manners to the dimensions of a criticism of life. Our most provoking social critic is Shaw although Pirandello soars further into a crystalline sphere of ideas. The world of Aristophanes could have been shaped only in the sophisticated theatre of an Athens that had begun to examine its own conventions. Aristophanes is like Erasmus or Gide, who serve as the intellectual conscience of a nervous and self-scrutinizing society where all is not now so well as it might be or has been or seems to be.

At the radiant peak of high comedy—a peak we can easily sight from Meredith's essay—laughter is qualified by tolerance, and criticism is modulated by a sympathy that comes only from wisdom. Just a few writers of comedy have gained this unflinching but generous perspective on life, which is a victory over our absurdities but a victory won at a cost of humility, and won in a spirit of charity and enlightenment. Besides Shakespeare in perhaps *The Tempest* one might name Cervantes and Henry James and Jane Austen or Thomas Mann in his *Magic Mountain* when pliable, diseased Clavdia yields carelessly to the stricken Hans Castorp in a scene where the grimness of human life, its folly and its error are seen clearly and with a perverse tenderness. *Petit bourgeois!* she says to him—*Joli bourgeois à la petite tache humide*. For they both know that the body, love, and death are all three the same thing and that the flesh is sickness and desire and life only a fever in matter. This is how high comedy chastens men without despair, without rancor, as if human blunders were seen from a godlike distance and also from within the blundering self. The deep humiliation and reassurance in Don Quixote's madness and recovery with his resignation, detachment, and self-awareness are all confirmed by the experience of Shakespeare's Benedick—to whom Meredith appealed. After proving himself as foolish as the rest of the world, Benedick comes to a vision of the human condition. For man is a giddy thing and this is my conclusion. Benedick speaks without bitterness, bias, or pride and has learned, like Hans Castorp, to accept the insufficiency of man without being damaged.

So the range of comedy is more embracing than the range of tragedy and if tragedy occurs at some middle point in ethical life where failure is weighed against man's nobility of spirit, comedy ventures out into the farther extremes of experience in both directions, toward the bestial or obscene, and at the



other end of the spectrum toward the insane heroics of Nietzsche or the vision of Prospero who sees sin as the last mistake of all our many mistakes dispelled before our clearer reason whenever hate seems more absurd than charity

We may prefer one theory of comedy to another but we shall find it hard to get along without the other. In *Winter's Tale* Autolycus meditates on his lot. I am courted now with a *double occasion*. The phrase is useful for comedy is built upon double occasions double premises double values. Nothing human is alien to me says the character in Terence. Nothing human is alien to comedy. It is an equivocal art. If we now have trouble isolating comedy from tragedy this is not because comedy and tragedy are identical, but rather because comedy often intersects the orbit of tragic action without losing its autonomy. Instead comedy in its own right boldly and illogically lays claim to some of the values that traditionally are assigned to tragedy alone. Think for example of Henry James's *Beast in the Jungle* which really is comedy of manners suddenly consumed in the flame of Marcher's grief that he has lost May forever through his own selfishness. Here is comedy seen ruthlessly from within as Bergson did not allow. Marcher is a fool—but a sinister fool, an egoist far more barbaric than Meredith's sleek Sir Willoughby Patterne. And James's London a society of genteel manners and frail nerves, is a scene where savage eyes glare behind the social simper.

## II *The Ancient Rites of Comedy*

In fact to interpret the complications and contradictions in comedy, we must look far backward toward Aristotle and the Greeks for the meanings in comedy are tribally old and Bergson and Meredith refine almost beyond recognition the primitive violence of comedy which curiously reappears again in James Kafka and us moderns.

The notion of an affinity between tragedy and comedy would not be strange to the Greeks not to Socrates we know because of what happens in *The Symposium* a very dramatic dialogue where Plato brings together in debate the comedian Aristophanes the tragedian Agathon and along with them the goat-faced Socrates the philosophic clown a figure who stands near the center of all the larger problems of comedy. In the course of this night long dialogue Socrates is described by Alcibiades as looking exactly like the masks of Silenus. He turns to Socrates and asks: You will not deny that your face is like that of a satyr? And there is a resemblance in other points too. For example you are a bully. Yet Socrates makes the notorious Alcibiades ashamed of his misdeeds. Alcibiades complains, Mankind are nothing to him, all his life is spent in

mocking and flouting at them. This Socrates, resembling a caricature of a man is the person who alone is able to make the dissolute Athenians care for their souls his words amaze and possess the soul of every man. Plato reports that by daybreak only Aristophanes and Agathon are still awake to hear Socrates insisting that anyone who can write tragedy can also write comedy because the craft (*techne*) of writing comedy is the same as the craft of writing tragedy.

Surely Socrates comedian and martyr mocker and moralist was the proper one to hold this notion, which has gained new implication now that the social anthropologists have discovered what Aristotle already knew—namely that comedy is a primal rite a rite transformed to art. As F. M. Cornford puts it comedy is a scene of sacrifice and a feast.<sup>8</sup> Aristotle intimated as much in the *Poetics* by stating that at first both tragedy and comedy were improvisations the one rising from the Dithyramb the other from phallic songs still used as ritual in many of our cities. These improvisations having evolved in different ways each found its natural form the comic writer presenting men as worse than they are the tragic writer as better and the comic being a version of the Ludicrous—which in turn is a variety of the Ugly without being painful or destructive. Comedy he adds has no history—that is it passed unnoticed for a long time although it had definite forms (*schemata*) even in the early poets. Aristotle thinks that tragedy gained its magnitude after it passed its satyric phase and took on a stately manner at a late phase of its history. Thereafter tragedy imitated noble actions of noble personages whereas comedy dealt with the meaner sorts of actions among the ignoble. He also says that comedy turned from an early use of invective to a dramatizing of the ridiculous. In early satyric dramas poetry was adapted to dancing.

However cryptic Aristotle's comment may be it is clear that he traces the origins of drama to some sort of fertility rite—Dionysiac or phallic—the primitive sacrifice and feast mentioned by Cornford. It is now accepted that art is born of rites and that the comic and tragic masks are themselves archetypal symbols for characters in a tribal semantics of ritual. Behind tragedy and comedy is a prehistoric death and resurrection ceremonial the rite of killing the old year (the aged king) and bringing in the new season (the resurrection or imitation of the adolescent king). Associated with killing the old king and devouring his sacrificial body was the ancient rite of purging the tribe by expelling a scapegoat on whose head were heaped the sins of the past year. Frazer describes what happened during this public expulsion of evils at a season when there was an oblation of first fruits.

the time of year when the ceremony takes place usually coincides with some well marked change of season this public and periodic expulsion of devils is commonly preceded or followed by a period of general license during which the ordinary restraints of society are thrown aside and all offences short of the gravest are allowed to pass unpunished (*Golden Bough*)

At this public purging or catharsis the scapegoat was often the divine man or animal in the guise of victim to whom were transferred the sins and misfortunes of the worshippers Eventually the divine character of the scapegoat was forgotten as Frazer notes he became an ordinary victim a wretch who was a condemned criminal perhaps actually as well as ritually guilty This ancient death and resurrection rite then seems to have had a double meaning the killing of the god or king to save him and the tribe from the sterility of age and the expulsion of evils (or devils) amid rejoicing of a people who were redeemed by the sacrifice of a hero victim

From this rudimentary sacrifice and feast evolved comic and tragic poetry using a canonical plot formula older than either art or an elemental folk drama from which derived in obscure ways the action (myth) of the Athenian theatre In its typical form the archaic fertility ceremony—involving the death or sacrifice of a hero-god (the old year) the rebirth of a hero god (the new year), and a purging of evil by driving out a scapegoat (who may be either god or devil hero or villain)—requires a contest or *agon* between the old and new kings a slaying of a god or king a feast and a marriage to commemorate the initiation reincarnation or resurrection of the slain god and a final triumphal procession or *komos* with songs of joy Behind the marriage ceremonial probably lies the myth of the primal union between the earth mother and the heaven father Following this revelation of the mysteries of life the new hero king is proclaimed and elevated there is an apotheosis epiphany, or manifestation of the young hero god (a theophany)

The rites may take the guise of an initiation or testing of the strength of the hero or his fertility perhaps in the form of a questioning or catechism after which there comes to him a discovery or recognition—an *anagnorisis* or new knowledge Or else the sacrifice may be interrupted by an unwelcome intruder (an *alazon*) who views the secret rites he is a profaner of the mysteries an alien This character must be put to flight or else confounded in a struggle that may also occur in the form of a catechism to which he does not know the proper answers In either case there is a debate, a dialectic contest which is preserved in Aristophanes *Clouds* for instance as an argument between Right Logic and Wrong Logic Thus again the comic action is double, since it is both a rational debate and a

phallic orgy Logic and passion appeal together in the primal comic formula

In Cornford's opinion the dramatic form known as tragedy eventually suppressed the sexual magic in this canonical plot leaving only the portrayal of the suffering and death of the hero king or god Comedy however kept in the foreground the erotic action together with the disorderly rejoicing at the rebirth or resurrection of the god hero who survives his *agon* In this sense comedy preserves the archaic double occasion of the plot formula, the dual and wholly incompatible meanings of sacrifice and feast cruelty and festival logic and license So much we may read into Aristotle's remark that comedy was like tragedy originally an improvisation its action being a procession of the devotees of Phales carrying the emblem of the god that profane and sacred symbol the ithyphallus, the *penis erectus* After pausing at the place of sacrifice to pray to Dionysus they continued their procession to the burden of phallic songs

If this indeed be the origin of comedy we can guess why Aristotle said that tragedy advanced by slow degrees and having passed through many changes found its natural form and then stopped evolving Unlike comedy tragedy is a closed form of art with a single fixed and contained meaning (by contrast to the disorderly relaxed meanings in comedy) Tragedy demands a law of necessity or destiny and a finality that can be gained only by stressing a logic of plot or unified action with a beginning middle and end Within the confines of this action the hero is given to sacrifice or death That is tragedy performs the sacrificial rite without the festival—which means that it is a less complex less ambiguous form of drama than comedy Retaining its double action of penance and revel comedy remains an improvisation with a loose structure and a precarious logic that can tolerate every kind of improbability

The coherent plot is vital to tragic theatre (Aristotle says that plot is the very soul of tragedy), and a tragic action needs to convey a sense of destiny, inevitability and foreordination The tragic poet often implies there are unchanging moral laws behind the falling thunderbolt The fate of a tragic hero needs to be made intelligible as the comic hero's fate does not, or at least tragic fate has the force of necessity even if it is not intelligible Somehow tragedy shows what must happen even while there comes a shock of unsurmised disaster As Aristotle said in tragedy, coincidence must have an air of probability Then too tragedy subordinates character to the design of the plot, for the purpose of tragedy says Aristotle is not to depict character but rather to show men in action so that the character of a tragic hero reveals itself in a deed

which expresses his moral disposition Comedy on the contrary can freely yield its action to surprise chance, and all the changes in fortune that fall outside the necessities of tragic myth, and can present character for its own sake

Following what Aristotle implied Cornford is able to say that if tragedy requires plot first of all comedy is rooted so firmly in character its plot seems derivative auxiliary, perhaps incidental Unlike tragedy comedy does not have to guard itself by any logic of inevitability or by academic rules Comedy makes artistic all the unlikely possibilities that tragic probability must reject It keeps more of the primitive aspect of *play* than does tragedy

From the anthropologist's view the tragic action, however inspiring and however perfect in artistic form, runs through only one arc of the full cycle of drama for the entire ceremonial cycle is birth struggle death resurrection The tragic arc is only birth struggle death Consequently the range of comedy is wider than the tragic range—perhaps more fearless—and comic action can risk a different sort of purgation and triumph<sup>9</sup> If we believe that drama retains any of the mythic values of the old fertility rite, then the comic cycle is the only fulfilled and redemptive action and strange to think the death and rebirth of the god belong more fittingly to the comic than to the tragic theatre Is this the reason why it is difficult for tragic art to deal with Christian themes like the Crucifixion and the Resurrection? Should we say that the drama of the struggle death and rising—Gethsemane Calvary and Easter—actually belongs in the comic rather than the tragic domain? The figure of Christ as god-man is surely the archetypal hero victim He is mocked reviled, crowned with thorns—a scapegoat King

If the authentic comic action is a sacrifice and a feast debate and passion it is by the same token a Saturnalia, an orgy an assertion of the unruliness of the flesh and its vitality Comedy is essentially a Carrying Away of Death a triumph over mortality by some absurd faith in rebirth, restoration and salvation Originally of course these carnival rites were red with the blood of victims The archaic seasonal revel brought together the incompatibles of death and life No logic can explain this magic victory over Winter, Sin and the Devil But the comedian can perform the rites of Dionysus and his frenzied gestures initiate us into the secrets of the savage and mystic power of life Comedy is sacred and secular

Thus it happens that from the earliest time the comic ritual has been presided over by a Lord of Misrule and the improvisations of comedy have the aspect of a Feast of Unreason a Revel of Fools—a *Sottie* Comedy is a release, a taking off the masks

we have put on to deal with others who have put on decent masks to deal with us The Church herself knew how salutary is this comic rite of unmasking for near the season of Lent the monks used to appoint one of their number to be Lord of Unreason and chant the liturgy of Folly during which an Ass was worshiped and the mass parodied in a ceremony no less religious in its profane way than the Dionysian and Saturnalian revels of Greece and Rome<sup>10</sup> During these *ludi inhonesti* the monks at vespers gave the staff of office to a Lord of Misrule while they chanted *deposuit potentes de sede, et exultavit humiles* In performing the mock mass the celebrants brayed the responses The first Herod of the mystery plays may have been *Rex Stultorum* and we know that medieval drama never excluded the comic from its religious ritual Those in the thrall of carnival come out for a moment from behind the façade of their serious selves the façade required by their vocation When they emerge from this façade they gain a new perspective upon their official selves and thus when they again retire behind their usual *personae*, they are more conscious of the duplicity of their existence That is why Freud thought of the comic as an unmasking a mechanism that allows whether we watch or play it a free discharge of impulses we daily have to repress The carnival is an hour when we are permitted to recover our lost infantile laughter and to rejoice again with the pleasure of a child It redeems us from our professional life

Aristotle said that tragedy works a purgation or catharsis and carries off harmful passions by means of an allowed public cleansing of the self enabling us to face with poise the calamities of life Tragedy has been called *mithridatic* because the tragic action inoculating us with large doses of pity and fear inures the self to the perils we all face Comedy is no less *mithridatic* in its effects on the self and has its own catharsis Freud said that nonsense is a toxic agent acting like some poison now and again required by the economy of the soul Under the spell of this intoxication we reclaim for an instant our old liberties and after discharging our inhibited impulses in folly we regain the sanity that is worn away by the everyday gestures We have a compulsion to be moral and decent, but we also resent the obligations we have accepted The irreverence of the carnival disburdens us of our resentment and purges our ambivalence so that we can return to our duties as honest men Like tragedy comedy is homeopathic It cures folly by folly

The tragic law works a transformation from sin and suffering come calm of mind and resistance to disaster to fears that weaken us The transformations in comedy are equally miraculous from license and parody and unmasking—or putting on another mask

—come renewed sanity and responsibility a confidence that we have looked at things from a lower angle and therefore know what is incorruptible In Shakespeares play the madness of midsummer night is necessary to purge dotting and inconstant lovers After the fierce vexation of their dreams comes the bright Athenian dawn, with secure judgment As Hippolyta says

And all their minds transfigured so together  
More witnesseth than fancy's images  
And grows to something of great constancy  
But howsoever strange and admirable

The comic perspective can be reached only by making game of serious life The comic rites are necessarily impious for comedy is sacrilege as well as release That is one reason why comedy is intolerable to the sober moralist Rousseau who gravely protests that the women of Geneva will be corrupted by going to the theatre to see how Moliere satirizes virtuous men like Alceste Plato has the same puerile timidity despising the art that stirs up the rebellious principle in men especially at a public festival when a promiscuous crowd is assembled in a theatre where passions are roused and fed Plato's high minded snobbism like Rousseau's petty bourgeois seriousness is brought to bear chiefly against tragedy yet both have an abiding fear of the carnival, which has the power of harming even the good by its contagious impieties Plato warns his Guardians of the ideal State not to be given to laughter for violent laughter tends to provoke an equally violent reaction He especially fears buffooneries or any impulse to play the clown — and by encouraging its impudence at the theatre you may be unconsciously carried away into playing the comedian in your private life But Freud saw what this impudence means, for the comic action is a mode of representation through the opposite and man must periodically befoul the holy and reduce himself to folly We find ourselves reflected in the comedian who satisfies our need for impieties

Nietzsche believed that we discover truth in the excesses of a Dionysiac orgy, which is ecstasy as well as pain This orgy takes place in the theatre he calls epidemic because it sweeps the individual into the tide of a mass emotion In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche says that Greek drama was played at a point of conflict between our Apollonian and our Dionysian selves The Apollonian self is reason (*logos*), while the unruly Dionysiac self finds its voice in song (*melos*)—the song of the chorus Who are the chorus singing before the actors (who stand apart to speak their dialogue)? They are the satyr selves the natural beings madly giving out cries of joy and sorrow that arise from the vast cosmic night of primordial existence Is it possible, Nietzsche

asks that madness is not necessarily a symptom of degeneration or decline of a decadent culture? Perhaps this is a question for alienists—there are new roses of *health*! Nietzsche finds the substratum of both comedy and tragedy in the old satyr self Our deepest insights must—and should—appear as follies and under certain circumstances as crimes So Zarathustra rejoices in the Ass Festival A little valiant nonsense some divine service and ass festival some old joyful Zarathustra fool some blusterer to blow your souls bright When he sings the wild songs of Bacchus man loses his personal identity his differentiation, and ceases to be a thinker He becomes the Dionysiac hero the archetypal Reveller In the epidemic theatre there is a metamorphosis for civilized man finds again his archaic being among the throng

The Dionysiac theatre consecrates truth by outbursts of laughter Comedy desecrates what it seeks to sanctify The origastic cleansing of the self and the tribe is ritually performed in Shakespeares *Henry IV* 1 and 2 which is a Feast of Unreason ceremonially held in the taverns of Eastcheap with Falstaff presiding as Lord of Misrule The Lancastrian king Henry IV Bolingbroke has under the guise of just causes usurped the throne and slain the anointed king Richard II After this stroke of power politics Henry has ventured to put on the mask of repute and piety but behind this decent royal *persona* is the shadow self of the old unscrupulous Bolingbroke and he confesses to Hal

God knows my son  
By what by-paths and indirect crookt ways  
I met this crown and I myself know well  
How troublesome it sat upon my head

Henry cannot wear the royal garments easily because he has come to his throne by the unholy cunning of the opportunist Richard's blood will not out and like a tragic guilt it stains the grace of Henry's rule Yet Bolingbroke cannot drop the mask So Hal's heritage is tainted and the Lancastrian line must be purged This false righteousness can be washed away only by rites acted hilariously on Gadshill where Hal connives at another baser thievery that is detected—a parody of his father's practice In the depths of bohemia, amid whores, parasites, and cowards, a realm where Falstaff is king and priest young Hal is initiated into the company of Fools and Rogues Falstaff asks the ruthless question What is honor? The Lancastrians must answer before they are legitimate kings With all the lewdness of the comedian Falstaff reduces to absurdity the lineage of Bolingbroke when he jests at the parentage of young Harry and knows him to be his father's son only by a villainous hanging lip which proclaims him honestly begot In this pit of degradation Hal

cleanses himself and his line from the policy of his ancestors and by coming out from behind the façade of Lyncastrian pompousness he proves that he is indeed legitimately the hen apparent. By stooping to Doll Tearsheet Harry makes himself eligible to woo Kate of France. Falstaff is at once devil and priest, coward and hero, tempter and scoundrel and essentially the satyr who lives ineradicably behind the façade of every culture. Without his ribaldry his drunken wisdom. But he cannot be redeemed.

### III *The Guises of the Comic Hero*

Hence the range of comic action is far wider than Bergson supposed when he remarked that the comic is something mechanical encrusted on what is living and that the comic hero is dehumanized because he makes only gestures, automatic motions which look ridiculous when they are interrupted. Bergson perhaps following Stendhal's notion that we remain untouched by the plight of the comic figure saw him from only one angle, treating him as if he were a toy manikin which, wound up, is geared to execute the same motion wherever he is put. Bergson's comic hero is only a caricature of a man. Yet Don Quixote even while making mechanical gestures enters the realm of human action as a figure like Tartuffe cannot. In Dickens and Dostoevsky too the characters are geared to make a few stormy gestures but are not merely comic machines like Tartuffe and Harpagon who by contrast merely gesticulate. Chaucer's Wife of Bath is another creature capable of only a few responses who is nevertheless more than an automaton.

Above all other comic heroes perhaps Falstaff is a grotesque who has by no means disqualified himself from being a man. In fact he has a kind of massive probability and authentic selfhood in depth. Behind his great belly there is an ample personality and his gesticulations mechanical as they seem are comparable to the moral action of a tragic hero. Nor is Falstaff isolated from us like Tartuffe even when his cowardly motions are interrupted as he is caught red-handed at Gadshill or on the field at Shrewsbury. Exactly when Falstaff is driven into the tightest corner—when like Tartuffe he is caught firmly in the mechanical trap of comedy—he asks his most troublesome questions. What is honor? What is so much like a counterfeit man as a dead hero? Tartuffe does not have this ingenuity, this power to come to grips with us at close quarters. Falstaff is never so dangerous as when he is at bay—which proves that he has an existence of his own apart from the intrigue in which he has a role. Some of Dostoevsky's grotesque people who have obsessive notions also have this power to challenge us as we stand outside the comic arena and watch them from a position of presumed safety. The sickly

hero of *Notes from the Underworld* faces us with some very awkward problems which a character so absurd and artificial has no right to raise. Furthermore at the basest level of his low comedy Falstaff ventures to address himself directly to us making us doubt Bergson's opinion that only high comedy is close to life. Indeed Falstaff shows how narrow the margin sometimes is between high and low comedy for he was doubtless born a comic machine of a very low order—the *miles gloriosus*—yet as if by a leap he traverses the whole distance between low and high and is able to dwell disturbingly among us in his own libertine way.

The truth is that the comic hero has a complexity of character. Bergson and Meredith did not suspect Falstaff and Hal are both comedians who take part in the ancient ritual of feast and sacrifice, play and debate. In the oldest comedy there was a struggle or *agon* with the Impostor (or *alazon*) who looked with defiling eye upon the sacred rites that must not be seen. The *alazon* was put to flight after a contest with either the young king or with a character known as the *eirôn*, the ironical man. The *alazon* is a boaster who claims traditionally more than a share of the agonist's victory. It was the duty of the *eirôn* who often professed ignorance to reduce the *alazon* to bring him to confusion. Sometimes the king himself assumed the character of the *eirôn*—the ironical buffoon—to deflate the boaster or unwelcome intruder who appeared to know more than he actually did. Thus somewhere at the heart of old comedy—ritual comedy—was a combat of the king *eirôn* against the impostor-intruder *alazon*.

This ancient struggle was still being waged in Aristotle's *Ethics* (II 7, IV 7, 8) in the contrast between the boaster (*alazon*) and the self-deprecator (*eirôn*) and midway between these two characters is the straightforward man who neither exaggerates nor understates. Here is in old comedy the *alazon* is the alter ego of the *eirôn*. The two extremes appear together.

Aristotle mentions Socrates as the mock-modest character who understates things and in fact Socrates is a kind of alter ego to Falstaff, the boaster, buffoon. The double nature of the comic hero is symbolized in these two Falstaff and Socrates. They are of opposite disposition yet not so unlike as we might think. The essential character of the *eirôn* is incarnate in Socrates who was ignorant and who also had the disposition of the buffoon or fool, the features of the comic spirit itself, the coarse, ugly mask of the satyr or clown. The Socratic method is a tactic of winning victory by professing ignorance by merely asking questions of the impostors, the so-called wise men of Athens. Irony defeats the enemy on his own ground for in the course of the comic debate the supposed wisdom of the *alazon* is

reduced to absurdity and the alazon himself becomes a clown. Thus Socrates without asking any dogmatic answers corrects the folly of those sophists who claimed to know the truth or who were ignorant enough to presume there is no truth. So the monical man by his shrewd humility (lying low beneath the gods and saying nothing) proves to be wiser than the wisdom of the world. Irony has been called one of the faces of shame. Yet we must remember that Falstaff the buffoon and impostor used the same sort of interrogation. Socrates the ironist used. He asks the same sort of questions. What is honor? Socrates asked. What is justice?

Socrates like Falstaff is both ironist and buffoon. He is the questioner using a philosophic buffoonery to seek the truth. In *The Republic* Thrasymachus speaks of Socrates shamming ignorance in his imbecile way. Socrates is a sort of supersophist who inquires or doubts and thus again resembles Falstaff. He has a double or triple character, for he is as Falstaff was both victor and victim—a victim, eventually of the unthinking Athenians who refused to have their creed unsettled. He was finally condemned to drink the hemlock because he asked too many impious questions. And Falstaff is rejected by King Hal. The eiron himself with the rude face of the satyr is at last like the king in the fertility rite sacrificed by the tribe. Socrates is a kind of alazon too since he did claim to have his wisdom given him by his daemon, a still small voice he held sacred. When he is condemned to death by the court he stubbornly insists that if they kill him they will injure themselves far more than they injure him, for they will not find another like him, a gadfly given to the city by God. This is a considerable claim. He adds, I know but little and I do not suppose that I know. But I do know that injustice and disobedience to a better whether God or man is evil and dishonorable. Here we need to recall that Aristotle classified comic characters as being of three kinds: buffoon, ironist, and impostor. Socrates is all three—and so is Falstaff.

Thus is revealed the deep ambiguity in the comic hero: the Impostor, the enemy of God is not only the alter ego of the ironist; he is in Cornford's phrase the double of the very god himself. The god must be slain and devoured; therefore the guilt feeling of the tribe arising from sacrificing their god-king is transferred to the figure of the alazon, the antagonist and profaner who serves as scapegoat for the injury done the god during the fertility ceremony. The impostor profanes the rites; then he is beaten and driven out. So the tribe rationalizes its sin by persecuting the One Who Dares To Look. Cornford says: The reviling and expulsion of the Antagonist Impostor is the darker counterpart of the *Komos*, which brings in the new God, victorious

over him in the *Agon*. The god who is savior must be hated and slain. He has a double nature: he who is venerated, he who is reviled. Before the resurrection there is the crowning with thorns. The alazon is one of the disguises worn by the god-hero before he is sacrificed; he is also by the same token the antagonistic self that must be disowned before the worshiper is possessed by the god. Hence the ambivalence toward the comic hero.

Or the alazon eiron may be simply the agent of God, like Goethe's Mephisto, who explains how he is the spirit that endlessly denies but is also part of a power that would alone work evil but engenders good. The Impostor Profaner or Devil is a darkness that is part of light. Evil is inherent in Good and to reach salvation man must pass through a negation of negation. Therefore Faust finds himself bound to the impudent spirit who is only his darker self. Faust exclaims: Why must I be fettered to this infamous companion who batters upon mischief and delights in ruin? He does not yet know that the one who goads him—the Tempter—is a deputy of God. And the eiron who can put on the features of the buffoon and scapegoat is in his other self a mocker, blasphemer and Offender. He embodies again the side of the god that must be rebelled against before the god can be worshiped. God must be hated before he can be loved; denied before he is believed. The comedian plays the role of Doubting Thomas. He is at once a stone rejected by the builder and the cornerstone of the temple. Comedy is destructive and creative. So Falstaff like Socrates, has a double nature and a double fate: eiron and alazon, tempter and clown, hero and knave, the great god Pan and also *Pharmakos*—he who is expelled with communal sins heaped on his head.

Falstaff is a central image in comedy. Symbolically he is the Fool, and the province of the Fool is the whole wide circuit of life and death, laughter and tears, wisdom and ignorance.<sup>11</sup> The fool is comic man. He is no mechanical figure. His gestures have daemonic power, and he carries his scepter by right of ancient rule. We fear him as god; we laugh at him as clown. All the ambiguities and ambivalences of comic action pivot on this archetypal hero of many guises. The fool wears motley—the particolor of human nature—and quickly changes one mask for another, putting on indifferently and recklessly the shifting features of man, playing with gusto more roles than are suitable to the tragic hero. The fool at last proves to be the clown and the clown is He Who Gets Slapped—and is none the worse for his slapping. He is resilient with a vitality lacking to the tragic hero who must accept his misfortune and his responsibility with a stoic face, with a steadier logic than the absurd logic of comedy.

In general one may distinguish two orders of fool,



natural and artificial. The natural fool is the archaic victim who diverts the wrath of the gods from the anointed figure of the king. He is the alter ego of the Successful Man who needs to exempt himself from the jealousy and ill will of the Olympians and who therefore provides himself with someone insolent or ignorant, whom the gods smite. The fool is vicarious sufferer. He is reviled, beaten, and stricken, but he has the privilege of vilifying the Prosperous Man; he is free to humble the Exalted by mockery. The fool saves the hero from the awful sin of pride (*hubris*). He is the Ugly One who by slandering guards the king or even the priest from the evil eye. He may be dwarfed and deformed; he may be an idiot. But the idiot has the wisdom of innocence and the naivete of the child.

To this order of natural fools belongs Friar Juniper, the holy clown of the Franciscan order whose antics were a token of grace, who had great power against the Devil and went about in ragged cowl, greatly comforted when the people called him blockhead. In his mind the fool bears the stigmata of holiness. Dostoevsky's saintly prostitutes like Sonia or his idiots like Muishkin and Alyosha have a close kinship with the natural fool. Kafka's heroes—those anonymous abused innocents known only as K—are natural fools who behold their own affliction with wide, credulous eyes. Everything strikes K with wonder and surprise since he is the amateur in living who cannot be sophisticated by custom, who never learns his way around. For him life is always astonishment, effort, and uncertainty.

At his most contemptible the artificial fool may be the parasite of the old Greco-Roman comedies, a servile instrument in the hands of wealth and power. These fools use the only manners of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, or Osric, that yeasty, superserviceable knave spacious only in the possession of dirt.

But the fool can also be the seer, the prophet, the possessed, since the madness of the fool is oracular, sibylline, delphic. He may be the voice crying in the wilderness, an Evangelist or Baptist, or an Imbecile Prince like Muishkin, whose friends tell him he will always be a child and who has revelations. The recognition of God as our Father and of God's joy in men as His own children, which is the chief idea of Christ. The fool may be the godly Dolt like the medieval Tumbler of Our Lady or the poetic Seer like Rimbaud. He may, like Touchstone, look askance at life with a cool reluctance to commit himself. Sometimes his intuition is tragic like the naive cynicism of Lear's Fool, who sees the folly of playing Machiavellian games in a world rent by tempest. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus tells us with the voice of Innocence that we must accept the ridiculous as the basis of morality. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

The comedian is indeed a revolutionary simpleton. No modern has claimed this more emphatically than Kierkegaard, who saw how the religious man must first of all be a comedian. The religious individual has as such made the discovery of the comical in largest measure. Kierkegaard's religious man is not necessarily the comic poet or actor, but he is the one who has seen that our deepest experiences come to us in the form of contradictions. Therefore he is afflicted with the higher madness, that is the comedy of faith, a passionate belief in the absurd. The knight of faith knows that the pathetic is inherent in the comic; that suffering is a mark of blessedness. And hence it comes about that one is tempted both to weep and to laugh when the humorist speaks. Kierkegaard restates in another key the theme of Nietzsche's existential comedy: that one who suffers, by virtue of his suffering, *knows more* than the shrewdest and wisest can ever know. Like a modern saint Nietzsche writes: Suffering makes noble; it separates.

Thus in almost all his roles the fool is set apart, dedicated, alienated, if not outcast, beaten, slain. Being isolated, he serves as a center of indifference from which position the rest of us may, if we will, look through his eyes and appraise the meaning of our daily life. Archimedes is said to have promised: Give me a place to stand, and I will move the earth. In art, in ethics, in religion the fool finds a place to stand for he is the detached spectator who has been placed, or has placed himself, outside accepted codes. From this point, outside—this extrapolated fulcrum—he takes his leverage on the rest of us, and from his point of vantage can exclaim with Puck, the comic avenger: Lord, what fools these mortals be.

There is something malign in Puck's spirit; he is scornful and delights in confusion. When this scorn is fierce enough we have the comic spirit of Swift, who frightens us out of laughter into dismay, if not despair. Just as Kierkegaard discovers the extreme absurdities of faith by extrapolating the attitude of the humorist, so Jonathan Swift leads us to the verge of a gulf of hopelessness by extrapolating the mischievous attitude of Puck. His Majesty of Brobdingnag tells Gulliver, after deliberation: I can not but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth. The most galling of all comic figures are Swift's loathsome Yahoo-men, who reduce us all to intolerable shame.

There is something Puckish also, in Hamlet's spirit, taunting and curious as it is. Amid the rottenness of Denmark the Prince serves as a philosophic and temperamental fool, a center of indifference. He stands apart from gross revelry under his own



melancholy cloud and from his distance he is able to perceive more things than philosophy can dream for the dust of great Alexander may stop a bung-hole and however thick my lady paints she comes to a foul grave, the noisome state of Yorick who is eaten by the same worms that feed upon Polonius that duller fool Hamlet is humorist and sufferer existing alone with his disdainful soul. He allows himself every incaution and with midsummer lunacy puts an antic disposition on. Some of Hamlet's motives are devilish—Mephistophelian his vocation is picaresque to ask impudent questions and lead us along the narrow ledge where the immortalist walks making us quarter our thoughts with an obsessive guile. Hamlet, Mephisto, Byron, Stendhal, Nietzsche and Gide are heroes who belong in a comic theatre where man is goaded and teased led down the dimmest passes of sin to see what is learned by evil.

When he appears as tempter, the fool—the comic hero who stands outside—must put on the mask. He disguises himself as clown or devil wearing as need arises the garb of buffoon, ironist, madman. He must lead us finally, to the witches' kitchen and the Walpurgis Night, or to the wilderness where we meet our shadow selves face to face although we have disowned these selves in our public life. There in the wilderness or on the Brocken the god in us is confronted by the Adversary, our other self who lays before us illusions of pomp, knowledge, and pleasure. In tempting us the Adversary must have the features of innocence, must charm us with mannerly good will, gaiety, finesse, and high spirits. He may seem as honest as Iago whose motiveless malignity wears the bland mask of friendship. Iago is the Socratic interrogator who destroys us with our own ideals yet he is an illusion. I am not what I am, he says. This Adversary may speak folly or profanity or jest insanely as did Nietzsche, who tempted the whole respectable middle class with his madness. His Satyr Heroes have recognized Dionysus as god and they revert to the innocence of the beast of prey, conscience like jubilant monsters who perhaps come from a ghostly bout of murder, arson, rape and torture with bravado and moral equanimity as though merely some wild student's prank had been played.

The rebel, the immortalist, the free and licensed self in this terrible comedy of the future has passed beyond and looks back from a new and daring perspective upon the morality of the herd which is hollow. Nietzsche's comic hero is the Despairer, the Blond Beast, or else he is the Great Sick Man overcome by his disgust, his nausea as he examines from his point outside the premises of a morality we have never examined. To feel the spell of this Tempter we must take the awful risk of entering into a boundary situation where nothing is taken

for granted and where all our values must be found anew without help from the others. Here we walk alone upon the margin of Reason. The Adversary goes with us to this highest precipice of comedy, the edge of the abyss where we glance with Nietzsche into Chaos. There we must stand on the brink of Nonsense and Absurdity and not be dizzy. If we do not fall, or plunge, we may be saved. Only by taking this risk can we put Satan behind us. Only thus can the Rebel learn what is Good. The comic Feast of Unreason is a test and a discovery and our season spent mumming with the Lord of Misrule can show what will redeem us. The Adversary must be expelled. The Tempter must perish. That is, we must sacrifice him to save ourselves.

Young Hamlet late from Wittenberg stands alone on the brink of this abyss, sees himself as a ridiculous fellow crawling between heaven and earth with more sins at his beck than he has time to act. So he puts on the antic disposition of the fool. And if a sense of contradiction and absurdity is a cause of comedy, then Hamlet is a profoundly comic character. He encounters what Kierkegaard calls either/or choices, the extremes that cannot be mediated but only transcended. That is, the comic hero and the saint accept the unreconcilables in man's existence. Both find themselves face to face with the Inexplicable and the Absurd. When, for example, as Kierkegaard points out, Abraham holds the knife above Isaac and at the command of God is about to slay his son, he places himself outside and beyond all moral norms and is either quite simply a murderer or a believer. He stands alone in a situation that allows no middle term whatever. He meets an extreme peril that cannot be related to virtue or any human ethic. His dilemma can only be transcended by a perspective from infinity—looking at it from the infinite distance of faith, a perspective so far extrapolated beyond ethics that it extends from eternity. Then Abraham is rescued from the irreconcilables in his crisis.

The comic hero finds himself in situations like Abraham's because comedy begins from the absurd and the inexplicable and like faith, tolerates the miraculous. Dostoevsky as usual begins with the Unaccountable when old man Karamazov lies with Stinking Lizaveta and begets Smerdyakov who is as truly his son as the saintly Alyosha. In the same way Miranda in *The Tempest* knows that good wombs have borne bad sons. Antonio is proof. Prospero accepts these incompatibles in reality then transcends them by his perspective from infinity, for at the farthest reaches of his magical vision life is like some dream that seems to come and fade. Precisely because he is face to face with the Inexplicable the comic hero is eligible for rescue like Don Quixote, who is mad to the degree of pouring

cruels over his poor head but who dies, like a saint in a state of grace

Often the comic hero is rescued because Improvisation and Uncertainty are the premises of comic action and the goddess Fortuna presides over great tracts of the comic scene. But the law of Inevitability or Necessity bears heavily on the tragic hero who is not eligible for rescue because in tragedy man must somehow take responsibility for the flaws in the nature of things or at least pay a penalty for them. To be sure the tragic hero meets the Inexplicable—by what logic does Oedipus happen to confront his father on the road to Thebes and kill him in a narrow pass? Behind tragedy too is a riddle of the Sphinx, the warning of oracles only hoarsely spoken. In any case the tragic poet feels some compulsion to look backwards across the gulf of disaster and help us understand why the hero met his doom. Or he must fortify us against the Inexplicable and reassure us that Justice is not wrecked by it, whereas the comic artist can accept absurdities as the open premises of his account of life and not be troubled by them. The comedian practices an art of exaggeration, or overstatement.

The tragic hero however must heed some golden mean between extremes: he does not dare *play* with life as the comic hero does. The tragic hero meets either/or dilemmas but must pay some penalty for not being able to conciliate incompatibles. His only refuge from despair is a stoic endurance between those incompatibles: he must somehow prove himself adequate to the disasters he suffers. The tragic poet cannot like the comic artist or the religious hero look at man's struggle from infinite distances and revise its human weight or its penalties. Tragedy is a form of ethical heroism suggesting that man is the measure even between desperate choices.

The tragic hero noble and magnified can be of awesome stature. The comic hero refuses to wear the trappings of moral or civil grandeur, usually preferring motley or the agility of the clown. He is none the less man and Hamlet more than once rouses our suspicion that the tragic hero is eligible for comic roles or is it the other way round that Hamlet is a comic hero who generates tragic values? The Prince touches his deepest meanings when he has on his antic humor. Then he needs no grandeur to hide his weakness which is laughably naked.

Under the auspices of Fortuna comedy allows a play of character impossible in tragedy which requires a hero greater and better than most men but capable of error. As Aristotle says, the tragic hero cannot be either 'depraved' or simply a victim of bad luck. Comedy however delights to deal with those who are victims of bad luck along with those who are depraved or vicious—by means of the grotesque. By disfiguring the hated person in

caricature comedy is able to elevate hatred to art. Swift evidently saw man as depraved and vicious and projected his hatred into the grotesques called Yahoos. At the severest phase of grotesque we can behold the unnatural figures of King Lear and his daughters who seem to have reduced life to horrors from which tragedy turns away. The crazy Lear wails

When we are born we cry that we are come  
To this great stage of fools

In this savage play men seem to be puppets (but not automatons)

Cornford tells us why comedy can utilize the grotesque. In Greece and Rome comedy was gradually transmuted from religious Mystery to theatrical Mime. So when comedy lost its appearance of being what originally and essentially it was—a fertility celebration—the characters tended to become grotesques and the comedian continued using many of the stock masks tragedy had discarded. The original chorus of celebrant animal figures gave a name to some of Aristophanes' comedies like *The Birds* and *The Wasps*. The old goat chorus and satyr masks invaded the final comic unit of the tetralogy. The Impostor particularly became a stylized stereotyped figure like the Vice in medieval plays with his lath dagger and his sortie from Hell Mouth. In this way the comic personality did indeed become dehumanized when it was a vehicle for making certain gestures—the automatic gestures of Punch and Pierrot. Are not these lively creatures the ancestors of Tautouffe and other caricatures? They are born of Mime and live the repetitive existence of Bergson's manikins oscillating between life and art. Yet we must once more remind ourselves that Falstaff born of a mask generates a personality and temperament more human than his gestures entitle him to.

#### iv *The Social Meanings of Comedy*

The tradition of Mime, Mask and Caricature then explains why Bergson thought with Stendhal that comedy requires a certain rigidity in the comic personage—an *insociabilité* in the hero and a degree of *insensibilité* in the spectator. But Falstaff breaks down this insensibility and offers us a sort of release and purgation. Pierrot cannot. Falstaff proves what Freud suspected: that comedy is a process of safeguarding pleasure against the denials of reason which is wary of pleasure. Man cannot live by reason alone or forever under the rod of moral obligation, the admonition of the superego. In the person of Falstaff the superego takes a holiday. The comedian is the self behaving as prodigal and bohemian. From its earliest days comedy is an essential pleasure mechanism valuable to the spectator and the society in which he lives. Comedy is a momentary and

publicly useful resistance to authority and an escape from its pressures and its mechanism is a free discharge of repressed psychic energy or resentment through laughter. Its purpose is comparable to the release of the dream except that the dream is private and asocial whereas the comic uproar is infectious. Freud goes so far as to say: "The comical appears primarily as an unintentional discovery in the social relations of human beings." Meredith of course emphasized more strongly than Beigson that comedy is the ultimate civilizer.

The ambivalence of comedy reappears in its social meanings for comedy is both hatred and revel, rebellion and defense, attack and escape. It is revolutionary and conservative. Socially it is both sympathy and persecution.

One of the strongest impulses comedy can discharge from the depths of the social self is our hatred of the alien, especially when the stranger who is different stirs any unconscious doubt about our own beliefs. Then the comedian unerringly finds his audience the solid majority itself a silent prey to unrecognized fears. He can point out our victim, isolate him from sympathy and cruelly expose him to the penalty of our ridicule. In this role the comic artist is a conservative or even a reactionary who protects our self-esteem. Wherever comedy serves as a public defense mechanism it makes all of us hypocrites: we try to laugh our doubts out of existence. Wherever comedy is a symptom of fear, our mirth indicates the zeal with which we are maltreating our scapegoat. Certainly the laugh of the satirist is often a sneer and there is an undercurrent of satire in most comedy.

To this extent the comic response is tribal and if it is malicious, uncivilized. Any majority secretes venom against those who trouble it; then works off this venom in mocking some figure like Shylock the Jew, the Usurer hated by right-thinking Christians precisely because he lives in the free and open market on a premise of ruthless competition. Shylock is the naked image of renaissance initiative, whose thrift is called greed only because he is Hebrew.

And thrift Shylock protests is blessing if men steal it not. Could any gentile entrepreneur put it better? The inconsistency is implied by the shadow of pathos falling across Shylock's ugly figure. Let us avoid the old dispute whether Shylock is tragic; it is clear enough that according to the confused premises of the play a Christian without money is tragic and a Jew without money is funny. And Jews should be without money. Unless the Jew is Jessica who becomes Christian by gilding herself with ducats.

Granted that Shakespeare sees his victim in double perspective (for Shylock the monster becomes Shylock the man when he asks: "If you prick us, do we not bleed?") the Elizabethan audience probably did

not see the Jew in this double way but took his grotesque figure to be a hateful and hated image of greed. The higher the social charge in comedy the less the audience is likely to care about distinguishing truth from prejudice. The classical instance would be *The Clouds*, a play in which Aristophanes evidently leads a pack of right-minded Athenians in hounding down sophists who have insulted the gods and shaken the ordinary pieties. Never mind what questions the sophists really asked; never mind whether we can answer their questions—we must quell these troublemakers.

Strike smite them spare them not for many reasons  
BUT MOST BECAUSE THEY HAVE BLASPHEMED THE GODS

The attack in Molière's *Highbrow Ladies* is not so blunt but it is none the less based on the premise that women are not entitled to be foppish; they must be conveniently stupid.

Usually the comedian will address us with most assurance when he is conservative: when he affirms the security of any group already unsure of itself. In middle class societies particularly the comic artist often reassures the majority that its standards are impregnable or that other standards are not normal or sane. Then the comedian banishes doubt by ridicule and is the diplomatic artist.<sup>12</sup>

Yet this defense of the *status quo* occurs in a society where there is a hidden conflict in social standards and the comedian may appear on the other side of the barricades with the revolutionaries. Falstaff gleefully invites us to join him in making bohemian sallies among the ranks of the Philistines, bringing confusion to their hosts. The very appearance of Shylock as a sympathetic villain indicates the malaise in Elizabethan society about rugged individualism. Similarly the figure of Tartuffe is a focus for the conflict between an ideal of personal integrity and the unscrupulous piety of an acquisitive class. In despising Tartuffe we despise our own hypocrisy, whether it be a false puerile asceticism or the slippery indulgence of the Jesuits. Tartuffe could be born only in a society anxious about its honesty. He is a sign of what we reject.

Or else the comedian can evade the conflict, relieving the stress between competing ideals by laughter. He may enable us to adjust incompatible standards without resolving the clash between them. Thus we laugh when Tartuffe brings our conflict into the open because we may not wish to recognize that we, too, seek power, women, and money and that all these may be more desirable than piety. We laugh at Tartuffe because we do not intend to see clearly what he means. We may also laugh at Falstaff because we do not—must not—grant that good sherris sack is after all the real value of life and honor only a word. Falstaff raises questions we wish

to blink, and we laugh at him to prevent his damaging our convictions which are taboo.

In its boisterous moods comedy annihilates the power of evil in the person of the scapegoat. Yet we have already seen that this triumphant laughter is a mode of defense because the enemy who has power over us must be neutralized by transforming him into a harmless victim.<sup>13</sup> Falstaff we have said has the sacred power of a god of fertility; therefore he must be disguised before he can be laughed out of existence lest he threaten us too closely. Comedy is at once a defense against the Enemy and a victorious assault upon Him. He vanishes in an explosion of choral mirth.

At its most triumphant moments comic art frees us from peril without destroying our ideals and without mustering the heavy artillery of the punitan. Comedy can be a means of mastering our disillusion when we are caught in a dishonest or stupid society. After we recognize the misdoings, the blunders we can liberate ourselves by a confident wise laughter that brings a catharsis of our discontent. We see the flaws in things but we do not always need to concede the victory even if we live in a human world. If we can laugh wisely enough at ourselves and others, the sense of guilt, dismay, anxiety or fear can be lifted. Unflinching and undaunted we see where we are. This strengthens us as well as society.

When comic art is generous enough it is a triumphant affirmation of truth—which we see cannot be damaged by our failures. Great comic artists assume that truth may bear all lights.<sup>14</sup> In this belief lies the heroic courage of the comedian. The unvanquishable Falstaff is an ageless witness that truth can bear all lights; this comic giant proves that honor cannot be sullied in Eastcheap or on Gadshill. He breaks down our unreliable attitudes—unreliable because they are overguarded. His obscene questions strip us of our linen decencies and free us from the iron yoke of conformity. This high priest of comedy is doing us the service John Milton gravely did in *Areopagitica* when he protested against fugitive and cloistered virtues. That which purifies us is trial. Milton writes, and trial is by what is contrary. Milton requires trial by dust and heat. Falstaff challenges us from alleys and bawdy houses. He asks us to walk out of the whitened sepulchre we have made into our world, and when we walk abroad with Falstaff we discover what John Milton discovered: that truth is strong next to the Almighty and will not be put to the worse when she grapples with falsehood in open encounter.

To be able to laugh at evil and error means that we have surmounted them. Comedy may be a philosophic, as well as a psychological compensation. Whenever we become aware that this is not the best of possible worlds, we need the help of the comedian

to meet the insuperable defects of actuality.<sup>15</sup> We escape with him into a logical order by laughing at the imperfections of the world about us. The comic artist releases us from the limitations in things as they are. Chafed by the deficiencies in reality the comedian may be more intransigent than the tragedian. Tragedy accepts the flaw in the world as it is, then ventures to find nobility in the inexorable march of actual situations. If the tragic illusion is potent enough we are reconciled to the tears at the heart of things. But unless he is in his diplomatic mood, the comedian refuses to make these concessions to actuality and serves instead as chief tactician in a permanent resistance movement or rebellion within the frontiers of human experience. By temperament the comedian is often a fifth columnist in social life.

An outrageous rebel is that same picaresque knave Falstaff who dares us to stride with him across the boundaries of caution into the Walpurgis Night of a new philosophic order where one lives completely at ease. Even the rococo comedy in *Tristram Shandy* is daring for Sterne trespasses smugly against every decency for the sake of liberating his exquisite feelings. One of the annoying intransigents in our own society was Andre Gide who temperamentally was unable to write tragedy but insisted on publishing in the teeth of his serious friends, his diabolical *Corydon*. Gide kept saying: My function is to disturb. He is the classic type of comic artist who is *agent provocateur*. In Gide and Goya and Swift the tenor of comedy is uncompromising irreverent.

In her own quiet way Jane Austen devastates our compromises and complacencies—especially male complacency. It is said one can read her novels and never guess that France was red with terror or that British troops were dying at Waterloo. She leaves all that turmoil to the romantics. Meanwhile Miss Austen placidly undermines the bastions of middle class propriety. Her irreverence is calm, but she knows better than the romantics that one must not compromise one's honesty. She is not the less dangerous because she operates inconspicuously. There she resembles Henry James who lays bare in his overbied prose the shameless vulgarity of the *haute bourgeoisie*. We must not be deceived either about Miss Austen's cool disposition which seems defensive, wary of being taken in. She is using the caution native to those comic artists who contrive to protect themselves against scorn while they are making us scorn others. Her contempt is polite.

This is comedy near its highest which Bergson and Meredith agree, is a game played in social life. In *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* Bergson described two orders of society: the one unchanging, mechanical, stratified, conservative and closed; the other mobile, organic, fluid and open. A colony of insects is a closed order alert for danger, attack

defense. It is a society with Spartan efficiency and ability to survive. The members of a closed society care nothing for humanity but live untroubled by dreams or doubts. The open society has a different morality because it is sensitive to the fringe of intuition—vague and evanescent—that envelops every clear idea. Those living in an open society are self-aware, responsive to the nuance, the not-wholly-formulated. The open society gives play to individuality, true selfhood. Stendhal's hero Julien Sorel belongs in an open society, but is trapped within the confines of a closed caste system. So his adventures become a picaresque comedy played at the expense of the insensitive people about him and of his own malaise.

To expand Bergson's idea a little, we may say that the lower the comedy, the more it needs a closed social order and the higher the comedy, the more the situation is open socially and morally. The mechanics of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* are possible in a situation firmly closed, where events exactly balance each other in a series of neatly arranged coincidences. The moral rigidity in this world is suggested by the Duke's mechanical paralyzing ethic which causes him to say to Aegeon: "For we may pity, though not pardon, thee."

The situation in *Twelfth Night* seems to be more open, but really is not. Behind the delicate manners in Illyria is a tightly closed social order, as the aspurning Malvolio finds, to his distress and our delight. The fellow is a bounder; his eye is fixed hard on Olivia; he is the butler who woos his mistress. The man is a yellow stockinged fool, and he is a fool first of all because he wishes to leap the barriers which are far too high. At all costs Malvolio must not climb. Obviously Malvolio is an ass—obviously. Yet no more so than Sir Andrew Aguecheek, at whom we laugh but not malignly as we do at Malvolio. Sir Andrew has a prerogative of asininity in virtue of his birth. He is a natural, not a bounder. Hard-mindedly we identify our scapegoat, Malvolio, parading cross-gartered, even if we do not choose to see him for what socially he is: the Impostor who must be expelled with a vengeance. Sir Andrew cannot be devalued by the sneer alone, because he is guarded by his rank. But Malvolio, the popinjay, ouses our archaic wrath at the Pretender—who is in this event our own social alter ego to be publicly tormented, disclaimed, icily denied. Comedy of manners often releases the cruelty in a closed society, and the stiff ranks in this society put us in unnatural positions.

At the height of comedy, the whole situation opens in many directions. *Love's Labour's Lost* begins as if it were to be a closed comedy like *Twelfth Night*, for the scene is the fastidious Academe in Navarre, where some precious fools are pledging themselves to an ascetic life for three years, depriving themselves of sleep, food, and love.

Berowne alone protests in the name of grace. Then one by one the lordly fantasticoes fall in love with very frail women and break their vows, yielding to the flesh. These wits bring themselves face to face with human realities. But before they can readjust, the King of France dies, and they all find themselves standing at the mouth of the grave, where they must pause. The entire company disperses with a curiously somber and hesitant benediction: "You that way, we this way." The play shows how the movement of high comedy is expanding, scattering itself from situation to situation, always farther abroad, opening toward other possibilities, holding all in suspense.<sup>16</sup> Berowne is one of those who, with Benedick and Mercutio and Hamlet, cannot be at home in a closed plot, a closed society, a closed ethic.

Shakespeare's most open comedy—nearly mystic in Bergson's sense—is *The Tempest*, where all the machinery of plot is suspended in evanescent meanings that are almost musical. This play disperses into unknown modes of being, where even Caliban can seek for grace. The act of forgiveness is the moral pole of this comedy, and under the spell of Prospero's sea-change we are able to look as if from afar backward upon the wrongs done in the dark abyss of the past. Evil is there, in Antonio and Sebastian, in Stephano and Trinculo and Caliban, but at these moral latitudes we can see even the vicious Antonio as if he were only a troubling recollection. Amid devouring shows and strange noises, human nature is transfigured. Prospero's magic is the godlike charity of understanding, thus enduring all. Using the tolerance of high comedy and its confidence, Prospero speaks gently to those who tried to kill him. In this larger perspective, sin seems to be the last delusion of man's mind, an error that is absurd. Prospero's vision of life is not tragic, because sin is seen from distances that exempt man from disastrous penalties. All miracles are performed at this height of comedy, which brings us into a shifting, open world that continually transforms itself without being emptied of the cruelest actualities. Antonio is eager to murder with his three inches of obedient steel, yet these failings in men cannot damage the illusion that is truth. The vile Antonio cannot destroy what is good. Tragic danger is here cancelled by a feat of moral insight. The drama of Prospero's isle, the farthest reach of comedy, is an insubstantial pageant. It is also a triumphant revision of life, a politics of illusion.

Bergson must have seen life as Prospero did, since he described this politics of illusion in *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*.

The open society is the society which is deemed in principle to embrace all humanity. A dream dreamt now and again by chosen souls, it embodies on every occasion something of itself in creations, each of which through

a more or less far reaching transformation of man conquers difficulties hitherto unconquerable

Prospero's charity is the imaginative fulfillment of an ethic such as Bergson mentions. There is nothing in actuality to justify his mercy, his confidence or his vision yet these master the failings of nature and work a change in man. Comedy is indeed like a dream as even Bergson perhaps did not suspect. In saying that life is rounded with a sleep Prospero is but repeating the words spoken by Theseus king of a realm where there were midsummer-night dreams for when Theseus saw the silly interlude rudely played by the mechanicals in honor of him and Hippolyta he explained. The best in this kind are but shadows and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them. Theseus saw that the drama was there even if it was badly played and he was grateful to the wretched players, who gained their triumph not on their poor stage but in Theseus' fancy.

The high comic vision of life is humane, an achievement of man as a social being. Meredith addressed himself to our united social intelligence, which is the Comic Spirit. He suspected that comedy is the ultimate civilizer. If Prospero's comedy is transcendently open, Meredith's social comedy remains a worldly discipline with nevertheless, full moral overtones. In all civilized societies, Meredith insists the comic spirit must hover overhead, its lips drawn in a slim, hungry smile, wary and tense, thoughtfully eager to see the absurdities of polite men and women. Kierkegaard might have been describing Meredith's faun when he said the comic spirit is not wild or vehement, its laughter is not shrill. For Kierkegaard too, the highest comedy like the highest pathos rarely attracts attention by making great shows. Only the lower forms of the comical do show themselves by something extrinsic. The highest in life does not make a showing because it belongs to the last sphere of inwardness. No society is in good health without laughing at itself quietly and privately, no character is sound without self scrutiny without turning inward to see where it may have overreached itself. The perception of the self as comic touches the quick and honest self-inspection must bring a sense of the comical. This kind of awareness is an initiation into the civilized condition, it lightens the burden of selfishness, cools the heat of the ego, makes us impressionable by others.

So the comic spirit keeps us pure in mind by requiring that we regard ourselves skeptically. Indeed this spirit is an agent of that civilizing activity Matthew Arnold called criticism which is essential to culture. It is an activity necessary to middle class society where we gravitate easily toward that dead center of self satisfaction, the Philistine. Arnold tells us why criticism brings salvation, and why culture is criticism.

And thus culture begets a dissatisfaction which is of the highest possible value in stemming the common tide of men's thoughts in a wealthy and industrial community and which saves the future as one may hope from being vulgarized even if it cannot save the present (*Culture and Anarchy*)

Shakespeare's plays says Meredith are saturated with the golden light of comedy—the comedy that is redemptive as tragedy cannot be. Consider what happens in *Much Ado About Nothing* when Benedick makes the startling comic discovery that he himself together with the other mistaken people in the play is a fool. Here is a moral perception that competes with tragic recognition. The irony of Benedick's recognition is searching for he has boasted, all along, that he cannot find it in his heart to love any of Eve's daughters, least of all Beatrice. And Beatrice for her part has avowed she will never be fitted with a husband until God makes men of some other metal than earth. Both these characters are too deep of draught to sail in the shoal waters of sentimentality and both have bravely laid a course of their own far outside the matchmaking that goes easily on in Messina. Each is a mocker or eiron but in being so, each becomes the boaster (alazon) betrayed into the valiant pose that they are exempt from love. Then they both walk wide eyed, like proud Oedipus into the trap they have laid for themselves. There they see themselves as they are. When Benedick hears himself called hard hearted he suffers the bewilderment of comic discovery and knows that his pose as mocker is no longer tenable. So he turns his scornful eye inward upon his own vanity if Beatrice is sick for love of his ribald self he must give up his misogyny and get him a wife. He yields himself absurdly to Beatrice saying Happy are they that hear their detractions and can put them to mending. At the extreme of his own shame Benedick is compelled to see himself as he sees others together along a low horizon. Thus occur the comic purgation, the comic resignation to the human lot, the comic humbling of the proud, the comic ennobling after an act of blindness. Those who play a comic role like Benedick or Berowne or Meredith's Sir Willoughby Patterne wrongheadedly are liable to achieve their own defeat and afterwards must hide their scars. The comic and the tragic heroes alike learn through suffering albeit suffering in comedy takes the form of humiliation, disappointment, or chagrin instead of death.

There is a comic road to wisdom as well as a tragic road. There is a comic as well as a tragic control of life. And the comic control may be more usable, more relevant to the human condition in all its normalcy and confusion, its many unreconciled directions. Comedy as well as tragedy can tell us that the vanity of the world is foolishness before the gods. Comedy dares seek truth in the slums of Eastcheap.



or the crazy landscape Don Quixote wanders across or on the enchanted Prospero isle. By mild inward laughter it tries to keep us sane in the drawing room among decent men and women. It tells us that man is a giddy thing, yet does not despair of men. Comedy gives us recognitions healing as the recognitions of tragic art. They are sometimes revelations and come in the moonlit forest of a summer night then Bottom with his ass head is transformed to a Seer, a Visionary and Bottom's Dream is apocalyptic. For Bottom the poor weaver reports: "I have had a dream past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. After this midnight dream everything is seen from a new distance, as Hermia says:

Methinks I see these things with parted eye  
When every thing seems double

Tragedy needs a more single vision than comedy, for the comic perception comes only when we take a double view—that is, a human view—of ourselves a perspective by incongruity. Then we take part in the ancient rite that is a Debate and a Carnival, a Sacrifice and a Feast.

#### NOTES ON THE TEXT

1 Most of what I say about Freud's interpretation of comedy derives from *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious*. But I have also drawn upon Ernst Kris *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* (1952) to describe what the unconscious contributes to comic art, especially the grotesque, and also on A. P. Rossiter *English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans* (1950) which has some useful passages on caricature. The remarks upon art as an interruption in normal consciousness are based on Anton Ehrenzweig *Psycho-Analysis of Artistic Vision and Hearing* 1953.

2 This theory of laughter as being due to a bisociation of sensibility is discussed at length in Arthur Koestler *Insight and Outlook* 1949.

3 Anthony M. Ludovici *The Secret of Laughter* 1932.

4 Probably the most important discussion of satanic laughter is Baudelaire's brief essay "On the Essence of Laughter" and "In General On the Comic in the Plastic Arts" which appeared as early as 1855 and was reprinted in *Aesthetic Curiosities*.

5 According to L. C. Knights, comedy is essentially a serious activity. (Notes on Comedy in *Determinations* ed. F. R. Leavis 1934).

6 As Edith Hamilton says in *The Greek Way*.

7 The scale of comic effects is arranged in Alan Reynolds Thompson *The Anatomy of Drama*, 1942, Chapter VI. I have modified Thompson's scale in certain ways.

8 Behind my whole discussion of this rite and my whole account of the inconsistent theories necessary to explain comedy is Francis M. Cornford *The Origin of Attic Comedy* 1914. Cornford's interpretation seems to me to offer our only means of understanding the incompatibles in comedy without laying ourselves open to a charge of willful illogicality. These incompatibles in comedy are also dealt with effectively in Johan Huizinga *Homo Ludens* and in Élie Aubouin *Technique et psychologie du comique*. See also Northrop Frye *The Argument of Comedy* in *English Institute Essays* 1948.

9 Gertrude Rachel Levy in *The Gate of Horn* (1948) p. 319 ff. stresses this interpretation but again my primary debt is to Cornford.

10 This parody is described in A. P. Rossiter *English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans* 1950.

11 In discussing the nature of the Fool and his many roles I have relied heavily on Enid Welsford *The Fool* 1935 as well as on Kris *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* 1952 and J. A. K. Thomson *Irony* 1927.

12 In *The Dark Voyage and the Golden Mean* Albert Cook advances the ingenious but somewhat narrow gauge theory that tragedy ventures to make the Dark Voyage toward Risk and Wonder whereas comedy stays safely within the limits of a Golden Mean. This is a tenable argument certainly, however the distinction can hardly be made this simply and the comedian is often a revolutionary as well as a diplomatic artist.

13 The best discussion of the complicated psychology behind this sort of comedy seems to me Hugh Dalziel Duncan *Language and Literature in Society* 1953 which I have utilized in the following comments.

14 So argues Duncan p. 53 ff. Ernst Cassirer has also written a major comment on the sympathetic vision of the great comic artists who he says bring us close to the realities of our human world and dissolve our scorn in a laughter that liberates us (*Essay on Man*).

15 James Feibleman *In Praise of Comedy* p. 178 ff. develops this view and shows how comedy is a form of rebellion against things as they are.

16 The point is made by Paul Goodman *The Structure of Literature* 1954 p. 89 ff.

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

1 What are the meanings of comedy which Sypher distinguishes? Do you find these discriminations useful? Are they applicable to the comedies you have read?

2 From what fields of evidence does Sypher draw his conclusions? How does he use them compared with Fergusson and Knight?

3 Could you apply the principles of criticism upheld by Fergusson, Knight and Sypher to the movies? Would they be helpful?

4 Which of the essays on the drama did you find most suggestive and why?







# POETRY





## THE ART OF POETRY

# The Study of Poetry

*Matthew Arnold*

Of all the towering figures of the nineteenth century though some now are a little stooped perhaps none speaks more directly and intimately to us today than does Matthew Arnold. Almost all the important themes of contemporary poetry—the isolation of the individual the separation of the artist from society life conceived as the prison house of routine the galling limits of man's knowledge the indifference of the gods and of nature the disintegration of hitherto accepted values the failure of the heroes of the mind of the past the conflicts between the sensual and the spiritual between religion and science between responsibility and escape the feeling of living uncertainly in an age of transition—all these themes were expressed by Arnold in clear and moving poetry. Yet if he gave way to despair in his poems in his life work as inspector of schools and in his prose writings Arnold took a more positive and sanguine point of view. He strove for a singleness of purpose he rejected the sense of isolation he thought that man could lift himself from the morass he held that poetry at its best could exercise a civilizing effect on society. As a critic Arnold is thought of as magisterial but no one who reads his lucid and supple prose almost conversational in tone can think of Arnold laying down the law. Rather he seeks to persuade by reason by apt quotation by the use of the simple repeated slogan almost by the charm of his literary personality. *The Study of Poetry* was published in 1880 as the General Introduction to *The English Poets* edited by T. H. Ward and reaffirms Arnold's belief in the high function of poetry in society. In it will be found his characteristic devices of persuasion the ease and urbanity of the style the single theme repeated again and again the right quotation the praise of the classics and of the English romantics and sounding above all the high moral note.

THE FUTURE of poetry is immense because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies our race as time goes on will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact in the supposed fact it has attached its emotion to the fact and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything the rest is a

world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry.

Let me be permitted to quote these words of my own as uttering the thought which should in my opinion, go with us and govern us in all our study of poetry. In the present work it is the course of one great contributory stream to the world river of poetry that we are invited to follow. We are here invited to trace the stream of English poetry. But whether we set ourselves as here, to follow only one of the several streams that make the mighty river of poetry, or whether we seek to know them all our governing thought should be the same. We should conceive of poetry worthily and more highly than it has been the custom to conceive of it. We should conceive of it as capable of higher uses and called to higher destinies than those which in general men have assigned to it hitherto. More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us to console us to sustain us. Without poetry our science will appear incomplete and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. Science I say will appear incomplete without it. For finely and truly does Wordsworth call poetry the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science and what is a countenance without its expression? Again Wordsworth finely and truly calls poetry the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge our religion, parading evidences such as those on which the popular mind relies now our philosophy pluming itself on its reasonings about causation and finite and infinite being what are they but the shadows and dreams and false shows of knowledge? The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted to them, for having taken them seriously and the more we perceive their hollowness, the more we shall prize the breath and finer spirit of knowledge offered to us by poetry.

But if we conceive thus highly of the destinies of poetry we must also set our standard for poetry high since poetry to be capable of fulfilling such high destinies must be poetry of a high order of excellence. We must accustom ourselves to a high standard and to a strict judgment. Sainte Beuve relates that Napoleon one day said when somebody was spoken of in his presence as a charlatan Charlatan as much as you please, but where is there *not* charlatanism? — Yes, answers Sainte Beuve in politics in the art of governing mankind that is perhaps true. But in the order of thought in art the glory the eternal honour is that charlatanism shall find no entrance herein lies the inviolableness of that noble portion of man's being. It is admirably said and let us hold fast to it. In poetry, which is thought and art

in one it is the glory, the eternal honour, that charlatanism shall find no entrance that this noble sphere be kept inviolate and inviolable. Charlatanism is for confusing or obliterating the distinctions between excellent and inferior sound and unsound or only half sound true and untrue or only half true. It is charlatanism conscious or unconscious whenever we confuse or obliterate these. And in poetry more than anywhere else it is unpermissible to confuse or obliterate them. For in poetry the distinction between excellent and inferior sound and unsound or only half sound true and untrue or only half true is of paramount importance. It is of paramount importance because of the high destinies of poetry. In poetry as in criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty the spirit of our race will find we have said as time goes on and as other helps fail its consolation and stay. But the consolation and stay will be of power in proportion to the power of the criticism of life. And the criticism of life will be of power in proportion as the poetry conveying it is excellent rather than inferior sound rather than unsound or half sound true rather than untrue or half true.

The best poetry is what we want, the best poetry will be found to have a power of forming sustaining and delighting us as nothing else can. A clearer deeper sense of the best in poetry, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it is the most precious benefit which we can gather from a poetical collection such as the present. And yet in the very nature and conduct of such a collection there is inevitably something which tends to obscure in us the consciousness of what our benefit should be and to distract us from the pursuit of it. We should therefore steadily set it before our minds at the outset and should compel ourselves to revert constantly to the thought of it as we proceed.

Yes, constantly in reading poetry a sense for the best, the really excellent, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, should be present in our minds and should govern our estimate of what we read. But this real estimate, the only true one is liable to be superseded if we are not watchful by two other kinds of estimate the historic estimate and the personal estimate both of which are fallacious. A poet or a poem may count to us historically they may count to us on grounds personal to ourselves, and they may count to us really. They may count to us historically. The course of development of a nation's language thought and poetry is profoundly interesting and by regarding a poet's work as a stage in this course of development we may easily bring ourselves to make it of more importance as poetry than in itself it really is we may come to use a language of quite exaggerated praise in criticising it in short to over-

rate it. So arises in our poetic judgments the fallacy caused by the estimate which we may call historic. Then again, a poet or poem may count to us on grounds personal to ourselves. Our personal affinities likings and circumstances have great power to sway our estimate of this or that poet's work and to make us attach more importance to it as poetry than in itself it really possesses because to us it is or has been of high importance. Here also we overrate the object of our interest and apply to it a language of praise which is quite exaggerated. And thus we get the source of a second fallacy in our poetic judgments—the fallacy caused by an estimate which we may call personal.

Both fallacies are natural. It is evident how naturally the study of the history and development of poetry may incline a man to pause over reputations and works once conspicuous but now obscure and to quarrel with a careless public for skipping, in obedience to mere tradition and habit from one famous name or work in its national poetry to another, ignorant of what it misses and of the reason for keeping what it keeps and of the whole process of growth in its poetry. The French have become diligent students of their own early poetry, which they long neglected the study makes many of them dissatisfied with their so-called classical poetry the court tragedy of the seventeenth century a poetry which Pellisson long ago reproached with its want of the true poetic stamp with its *politesse sterile et rampante* but which nevertheless has reigned in France as absolutely as if it had been the perfection of classical poetry indeed. The dissatisfaction is natural yet a lively and accomplished critic M. Charles d'Héricault the editor of Clement Marot, goes too far when he says that 'the cloud of glory playing round a classic is a mist as dangerous to the future of a literature as it is intolerable for the purposes of history.' It hinders he goes on it hinders us from seeing more than one single point the culminating and exceptional point the summary fictitious and arbitrary of a thought and of a work. It substitutes a halo for a physiognomy it puts a statue where there was once a man, and hiding from us all trace of the labour the attempts, the weaknesses the failures it claims not study but veneration it does not show us how the thing is done it imposes upon us a model. Above all for the historian this creation of classic personages is inadmissible for it withdraws the poet from his time from his proper life, it breaks historical relationships, it blinds criticism by conventional admiration and renders the investigation of literary origins unacceptable. It gives us a human personage no longer but a God seated immovable amidst His perfect work like Jupiter on Olympus and hardly will it be possible for the young student to whom such work

is exhibited at such a distance from him, to believe that it did not issue ready made from that divine head

All this is brilliantly and tellingly said but we must plead for a distinction Everything depends on the reality of a poet's classic character If he is a dubious classic let us sift him if he is a false classic let us explode him But if he is a real classic if his work belongs to the class of the very best (for this is the true and right meaning of the word *classic* *classical*) then the great thing for us is to feel and enjoy his work as deeply as ever we can and to appreciate the wide difference between it and all work which has not the same high character This is what is salutary this is what is formative, this is the great benefit to be got from the study of poetry Everything which interferes with it which hinders it is injurious True we must read our classic with open eyes and not with eyes blinded with superstition we must perceive when his work comes short when it drops out of the class of the very best and we must rate it in such cases at its proper value But the use of this negative criticism is not in itself it is entirely in its enabling us to have a clearer sense and a deeper enjoyment of what is truly excellent To trace the labour the attempts the weaknesses the failures of a genuine classic, to acquaint oneself with his time and his life and historical relationships is mere literary dilettantism unless it has that clear sense and deeper enjoyment for its end It may be said that the more we know about a classic the better we shall enjoy him and if we lived as long as Methuselah and had all of us heads of perfect clearness and wills of perfect steadfastness this might be true in fact as it is plausible in theory But the case here is much the same as the case with the Greek and Latin studies of our schoolboys The elaborate philological groundwork which we require them to lay is in theory an admirable preparation for appreciating the Greek and Latin authors worthily The more thoroughly we lay the groundwork the better we shall be able it may be said to enjoy the authors True if time were not so short and schoolboys wits not so soon tired and their power of attention exhausted only as it is the elaborate philological preparation goes on but the authors are little known and less enjoyed So with the investigator of historic origins in poetry He ought to enjoy the true classic all the better for his investigations he often is distracted from the enjoyment of the best and with the less good he overburies himself and is prone to over rate it in proportion to the trouble which it has cost him

The idea of tracing historic origins and historical relationships cannot be absent from a compilation like the present And naturally the poets to be ex-

hibited in it will be assigned to those persons for exhibition who are known to prize them highly rather than to those who have no special inclination towards them Moreover the very occupation with an author and the business of exhibiting him disposes us to affirm and amplify his importance In the present work therefore we are sure of frequent temptation to adopt the historic estimate or the personal estimate and to forget the real estimate, which latter nevertheless, we must employ if we are to make poetry yield us its full benefit So high is that benefit the benefit of clearly feeling and of deeply enjoying the really excellent, the truly classic in poetry, that we do well I say to set it fixedly before our minds as our object in studying poets and poetry and to make the desire of attaining it the one principle to which, as the *Imitation* says whatever we may read or come to know, we always return *Cum multa legeris et cognoveris, ad unum semper oportet redire principium*

The historic estimate is likely in especial to affect our judgment and our language when we are dealing with ancient poets the personal estimate when we are dealing with poets our contemporaries, or at any rate modern The exaggerations due to the historic estimate are not in themselves perhaps, of very much gravity Their report hardly enters the general ear probably they do not always impose even on the literary men who adopt them But they lead to a dangerous abuse of language So we hear Cædmon amongst our own poets compared to Milton I have already noticed the enthusiasm of one accomplished French critic for historic origins Another eminent French critic M Vitet comments upon that famous document of the early poetry of his nation the *Chanson de Roland* It is indeed a most interesting document The *joculator* or *jongleur Taillefer* who was with William the Conqueror's army at Hastings marched before the Norman troops, so said the tradition singing of Charlemagne and of Roland and of Oliver, and of the vassals who died at Roncevaux and it is suggested that in the *Chanson de Roland* by one Turoldus or Theroulde a poem preserved in a manuscript of the twelfth century in the Bodleian Library at Oxford we have certainly the matter perhaps even some of the words of the chant which Taillefer sang The poem has vigour and freshness it is not without pathos But M Vitet is not satisfied with seeing in it a document of some poetic value, and of very high historic and linguistic value he sees in it a grand and beautiful work a monument of epic genius In its general design he finds the grandiose conception in its details he finds the constant union of simplicity with greatness, which are the marks he truly says, of the genuine epic and distinguish it from the artificial epic of literary ages One thinks of

Homer this is the sort of praise which is given to Homer and justly given Higher praise there cannot well be and it is the praise due to epic poetry of the highest order only and to no other Let us try then the *Chanson de Roland* at its best Roland, mortally wounded lay himself down under a pine tree with his face turned towards Spain and the enemy—

*De plusurs choses a remembrer li prist  
De tantes teres cume li bers cunquist  
De dulce France des humes de sun lign  
De Carlemagne sun seignor ki l'nurrit*<sup>1</sup>

That is primitive work I repeat with an undeniable poetic quality of its own It deserves such praise and such praise is sufficient for it But now turn to Homer—

*Ὡς φάτο τοὺς δ' ἦδη κατέχευεν φυσίζοος αἶα  
ἐν Λακεδαιμονίᾳ αὐδὶ φίλῃ ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ*<sup>2</sup>

We are here in another world, another order of poetry altogether here is rightly due such supreme praise as that which M. Vitet gives to the *Chanson de Roland* If our words are to have any meaning if our judgments are to have any solidity we must not heap that supreme praise upon poetry of an order immeasurably inferior

Indeed there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent and can therefore do us most good than to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry Of course we are not to require this other poetry to resemble them it may be very dissimilar But if we have any tact we shall find them when we have lodged them well in our minds an infallible touchstone for detecting the presence or absence of high poetic quality and also the degree of this quality in all other poetry which we may place beside them Short passages even single lines will serve our turn quite sufficiently Take the two lines which I have just quoted from Homer, the poet's comment on Helen's mention of her brothers,—or take his

*Ἀ δειλὼ τι σφῶϊ δόμεν Πηλῆι ἀνακτὶ  
Θνητῷ νηεὶ δ' ἐστὼν ἀγῆρω τ' ἀθανάτῳ τε  
ἣ ἵνα δυστήνοισι μετ' ἀνδράσιν ἀλγεῖ ἐχέτοιν*<sup>3</sup>

the address of Zeus to the horses of Peleus—or take finally his

*Καὶ σε γέρον, τὸ πρὶν μὲν ἀκούομεν ὀλβιον εἶναι*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [ And he began to recall many things The many countries the knight had conquered Sweet France the men of his lineage Charlemagne his lord who brought him up ]

[ So she said but the life giving earth already held them fast in Lacedaemon their dear native land ]

<sup>3</sup> [ Ah wretched pair why did we give you to King Peleus a mortal while you are immortal and forever young? Was it that among ill fated men you should suffer? ]

<sup>4</sup> [ And you old man as we have heard were happy in former times ]

the words of Achilles to Priam a suppliant before him Take that incomparable line and a half of Dante, Ugolino's tremendous words—

*Io no piangeva sì dentro impietrai  
Piangevanelli*

take the lovely words of Beatrice to Virgil—

*Io son fatta da Dio sua merce tale  
Che la vostra miseria non mi tange  
Ne fiamma d'esto incendio non m'assale*<sup>5</sup>

take the simple but perfect single line—

*In la sua volontade e nostra pace*<sup>7</sup>

Take of Shakespeare a line or two of Henry the Fourth's expostulation with sleep—

Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast  
Seal up the ship-boy's eyes and rock his brains  
In cradle of the rude imperious surge

and take, as well Hamlet's dying request to Horatio—

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart  
Absent thee from felicity awhile  
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain  
To tell my story

Take of Milton that Miltonic passage

Darkened so yet shone  
Above them all the archangel but his face  
Deep scars of thunder had intrenched and care  
Sat on his faded cheek

add two such lines as

And courage never to submit or yield  
And what is else not to be overcome

and finish with the exquisite close to the loss of Proserpine the loss

which cost Ceres all that pain  
To seek her through the world

These few lines if we have tact and can use them are enough even of themselves to keep clear and sound our judgments about poetry to save us from fallacious estimates of it, to conduct us to a real estimate

The specimens I have quoted differ widely from one another but they have in common this the possession of the very highest poetical quality If we are thoroughly penetrated by their power we shall find that we have acquired a sense enabling us whatever poetry may be laid before us to feel the degree in which a high poetical quality is present or wanting there Critics give themselves great labour to draw

<sup>5</sup> [ I did not weep so grew to stone within They wept ]

<sup>6</sup> [ God in his mercy has so made me that your misery does not touch me nor the flame of this fire assail me ]

<sup>7</sup> [ In His will is our peace ]



out what in the abstract constitutes the characters of a high quality of poetry. It is much better simply to have recourse to concrete examples—to take specimens of poetry of the high the very highest quality and to say: The characters of a high quality of poetry are what is expressed *there*. They are far better recognized by being felt in the verse of the master than by being perused in the prose of the critic. Nevertheless if we are urgently pressed to give some critical account of them we may safely perhaps venture on laying down not indeed how and why the characters arise but where and in what they arise. They are in the matter and substance of the poetry and they are in its manner and style. Both of these the substance and matter on the one hand the style and manner on the other, have a mark an accent of high beauty worth and power. But if we are asked to define this mark and accent in the abstract our answer must be: No for we should thereby be darkening the question not clearing it. The mark and accent are as given by the substance and matter of that poetry by the style and manner of that poetry and of all other poetry which is akin to it in quality.

Only one thing we may add as to the substance and matter of poetry: guiding ourselves by Aristotle's profound observation that the superiority of poetry over history consists in its possessing a higher truth and a higher seriousness (*ψιλοσοφωτερον και σπουδαιοτερον*). Let us add therefore to what we have said this: that the substance and matter of the best poetry acquire their special character from possessing in an eminent degree truth and seriousness. We may add yet further: what is in itself evident: that to the style and manner of the best poetry their special character their accent is given by their diction and even yet more by their movement. And though we distinguish between the two characters the two accents of superiority yet they are nevertheless vitally connected one with the other. The superior character of truth and seriousness in the matter and substance of the best poetry is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its style and manner. The two superiorities are closely related and are in steadfast proportion one to the other. So far as high poetic truth and seriousness are wanting to a poet's matter and substance so far also we may be sure will a high poetic stamp of diction and movement be wanting to his style and manner. In proportion as this high stamp of diction and movement again, is absent from a poet's style and manner we shall find, also, that high poetic truth and seriousness are absent from his substance and matter.

So stated these are but dry generalities, their whole force lies in their application. And I could wish every student of poetry to make the application of

them for himself. Made by himself the application would impress itself upon his mind far more deeply than made by me. Neither will my limits allow me to make any full application of the generalities above propounded but in the hope of bringing out at any rate some significance in them and of establishing an important principle more firmly by their means I will in the space which remains to me follow rapidly from the commencement the course of our English poetry with them in my view.

Once more I return to the early poetry of France with which our own poetry in its origins is indissolubly connected. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that seed time of all modern language and literature the poetry of France had a clear predominance in Europe. Of the two divisions of that poetry its productions in the *langue d'oïl* and its productions in the *langue doc* the poetry of the *langue doc* of southern France, of the troubadours is of importance because of its effect on Italian literature,—the first literature of modern Europe to strike the true and grand note and to bring forth as in Dante and Petrarch it brought forth classics. But the predominance of French poetry in Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is due to its poetry of the *langue d'oïl* the poetry of northern France and of the tongue which is now the French language. In the twelfth century the bloom of this romance poetry was earlier and stronger in England at the court of our Anglo-Norman kings than in France itself. But it was a bloom of French poetry and as our native poetry formed itself it formed itself out of this. The romance-poems which took possession of the heart and imagination of Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are French: they are as Southey justly says the pride of French literature nor have we anything which can be placed in competition with them. Themes were supplied from all quarters but the romance setting which was common to them all and which gained the ear of Europe, was French. This constituted for the French poetry literature and language at the height of the Middle Age an unchallenged predominance. The Italian Brunetto Latini the master of Dante wrote his *Treasure* in French because he says: *la parole en est plus delitable et plus commune a toutes gens*. In the same century the thirteenth the French romance writer Christian of Troyes formulates the claims in chivalry and letters of France, his native country as follows:—

*Or vous ert par ce livre apris  
Que Gresse ot de chevalerie  
Le premier los et de clergie  
Puis vint chevalerie à Rome  
Et de la clergie la sorne  
Qui ore est en France venue  
Diex donst qu'ele soit retenue*

*Ft que li hus li abelisse  
Tant que de France n'isse  
L'onoi qui s'est aresteel<sup>8</sup>*

Now by this book you will learn that first Greece had the renown for chivalry and letters then chivalry and the primacy in letters passed to Rome and now it is come to France God grant it may be kept there and that the place may please it so well that the honour which has come to make stay in France may never depart thence!

Yet it is now all gone this French romance poetry of which the weight of substance and the power of style are not unfairly represented by this extract from Christian of Troyes Only by means of the historic estimate can we persuade ourselves not to think that any of it is of poetical importance

But in the fourteenth century there comes an Englishman nourished on this poetry taught his trade by this poetry getting words rhyme metre from this poetry for even of that stanza which the Italians used and which Chaucer derived immediately from the Italians the basis and suggestion was probably given in France Chaucer (I have already named him) fascinated his contemporaries but so too did Christian of Troyes and Wolfram of Eschenbach Chaucer's power of fascination however is enduring his poetical importance does not need the assistance of the historic estimate it is real He is a genuine source of joy and strength which is flowing still for us and will flow always He will be read as time goes on far more generally than he is read now His language is a cause of difficulty for us but so also, and I think in quite as great a degree is the language of Burns In Chaucer's case, as in that of Burns it is a difficulty to be unhesitatingly accepted and overcome

If we ask ourselves wherein consists the immense superiority of Chaucer's poetry over the romance poetry—why it is that in passing from this to Chaucer we suddenly feel ourselves to be in another world we shall find that his superiority is both in the substance of his poetry and in the style of his poetry His superiority in substance is given by his large free, simple clear yet kindly view of human life—so unlike the total want in the romance poets of all in telligent command of it Chaucer has not then helplessness, he has gained the power to survey the world from a central a truly human point of view We have only to call to mind the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* The right comment upon it is Dryden's It is sufficient to say, according to the proverb that *here is God's plenty* And again He is a perpetual foun

tain of good sense It is by a large free sound representation of things, that poetry this high criticism of life has truth of substance, and Chaucer's poetry has truth of substance

Of his style and manner if we think first of the romance poetry and then of Chaucer's divine liquidness of diction, his divine fluidity of movement it is difficult to speak temperately They are irresistible, and justify all the rapture with which his successors speak of his gold dewdrops of speech Johnson misses the point entirely when he finds fault with Dryden for ascribing to Chaucer the first refinement of our numbers and says that Gower also can show smooth numbers and easy rhymes The refinement of our numbers means something far more than this A nation may have versifiers with smooth numbers and easy rhymes and yet may have no real poetry at all Chaucer is the father of our splendid English poetry he is our well of English undefiled because by the lovely charm of his diction the lovely charm of his movement he makes an epoch and founds a tradition In Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton Keats we can follow the tradition of the liquid diction the fluid movement of Chaucer at one time it is his liquid diction of which in these poets we feel the virtue, and at another time it is his fluid movement And the virtue is irresistible

Bounded as is my space I must yet find room for an example of Chaucer's virtue, as I have given examples to show the virtue of the great classics I feel disposed to say that a single line is enough to show the charm of Chaucer's verse that merely one line like this—

O martyr soulded in virginiteel

has a virtue of manner and movement such as we shall not find in all the verse of romance poetry—but this is saying nothing The virtue is such as we shall not find perhaps in all English poetry outside the poets whom I have named as the special inheritors of Chaucer's tradition A single line however is too little if we have not the strain of Chaucer's verse well in our memory let us take a stanza It is from *The Prioress's Tale* the story of the Christian child murdered in a Jewry—

My throte is cut unto my nekke bone  
Saide this child and as by way of kinde  
I should have deyde yea longe time agone  
But Jesu Christ as ye in bookes finde  
Will that his glory last and be in minde  
And for the worship of his mother dere  
Yet may I sing O *Alma* loud and clere

Wordsworth has modernised this Tale, and to feel how delicate and evanescent is the charm of verse we have only to read Wordsworth's first three lines of this stanza after Chaucer's—

<sup>8</sup> [ Now you will be apprised by this book that in Greece there was the first honor of knighthood and of learning then knighthood came to Rome and the sum of learning which is now come to France May God grant that it be retained there and that this place beautify it just so long as honor not leave France ]

My throat is cut unto the bone I trow  
 And this young child and by the law of kind  
 I should have died yea many hours ago

The charm is departed. It is often said that the power of liquidness and fluidity in Chaucer's verse was dependent upon a free and licentious dealing with language such as is now impossible upon a liberty such as Burns too enjoyed of making words like *neck bud* into a dissyllable by adding to them and words like *cause rhyme* into a dissyllable by sounding the *e* mute. It is true that Chaucer's fluidity is conjoined with this liberty and is admirably served by it but we ought not to say that it was dependent upon it. It was dependent upon his talent. Other poets with a like liberty do not attain to the fluidity of Chaucer. Burns himself does not attain to it. Poets again who have a talent akin to Chaucer's such as Shakespeare or Keats have known how to attain his fluidity without the like liberty.

And yet Chaucer is not one of the great classics. His poetry transcends and effaces easily and without effort all the romance poetry of Catholic Christendom; it transcends and effaces all the English poetry contemporary with it; it transcends and effaces all the English poetry subsequent to it down to the age of Elizabeth. Of such avail is poetic truth of substance in its natural and necessary union with poetic truth of style. And yet I say Chaucer is not one of the great classics. He has not their accent. What is wanting to him is suggested by the mere mention of the name of the first great classic of Christendom, the immortal poet who died eighty years before Chaucer—Dante. The accent of such verse as

*In la sua volontade e nostra pace*

is altogether beyond Chaucer's reach; we praise him but we feel that this accent is out of the question for him. It may be said that it was necessarily out of the reach of any poet in the England of that stage of growth. Possibly; but we are to adopt a real, not a historic estimate of poetry. However we may account for its absence, something is wanting; then to the poetry of Chaucer, which poetry must have before it can be placed in the glorious class of the best. And there is no doubt what that something is. It is the *σπουδαιότης*, the high and excellent seriousness which Aristotle assigns as one of the grand virtues of poetry. The substance of Chaucer's poetry, his view of things and his criticism of life, has largeness, freedom, shrewdness, benignity; but it has not this high seriousness. Homer's criticism of life has it; Dante's has it; Shakespeare's has it. It is this chiefly which gives to our spirits what they can rest upon, and with the increasing demands of our modern ages upon poetry, this virtue of giving us what we can rest upon will be more and more highly esteemed.

A voice from the slums of Paris fifty or sixty years after Chaucer, the voice of poor Villon out of his life of riot and crime, has at its happy moments (as for instance in the last stanza of *La Belle Heaulmeire*) more of this important poetic virtue of seriousness than all the productions of Chaucer. But its apparition in Villon and in men like Villon is fitful; the greatness of the great poets, the power of their criticism of life, is that their virtue is sustained.

To our praise therefore of Chaucer as a poet there must be this limitation, he lacks the high seriousness of the great classics, and therewith an important part of their virtue. Still, the main fact for us to bear in mind about Chaucer is his sterling value according to that real estimate which we firmly adopt for all poets. He has poetic truth of substance though he has not high poetic seriousness; and corresponding to his truth of substance he has an exquisite virtue of style and manner. With him is born our real poetry.

For my present purpose I need not dwell on our Elizabethan poetry or on the continuation and close of this poetry in Milton. We all of us profess to be agreed in the estimate of this poetry; we all of us recognise it as great poetry, our greatest; and Shakespeare and Milton as our poetical classics. The real estimate here has universal currency. With the next age of our poetry divergency and difficulty begin. An historic estimate of that poetry has established itself, and the question is whether it will be found to coincide with the real estimate.

The age of Dryden together with our whole eighteenth century which followed it sincerely believed itself to have produced poetical classics of its own and even to have made advance in poetry, beyond all its predecessors. Dryden regards as not seriously disputable the opinion that the sweetness of English verse was never understood or practised by our fathers. Cowley could see nothing at all in Chaucer's poetry. Dryden heartily admired it and as we have seen praised its matter admirably; but of its exquisite manner and movement all he can find to say is that there is the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune in it which is natural and pleasing though not perfect. Addison wishing to praise Chaucer's numbers compares them with Dryden's own and all through the eighteenth century and down even into our own times the stereotyped phrase of approbation for good verse found in our early poetry has been that it even approached the verse of Dryden. Addison, Pope and Johnson.

Are Dryden and Pope poetical classics? Is the historic estimate, which represents them as such and which has been so long established that it cannot easily give way, the real estimate? Wordsworth and Coleridge as is well known denied it; but the authority of Wordsworth and Coleridge does not weigh

much with the young generation, and there are many signs to show that the eighteenth century and its judgments are coming into favour again. Are the favourite poets of the eighteenth century classics?

It is impossible within my present limits to discuss the questions fully. And what man of letters would not shrink from seeming to dispose dictatorially of the claims of two men who are at any rate, such masters in letters as Dryden and Pope—two men of such admirable talent both of them and one of them Dryden a man on all sides of such energetic and genial power? And yet, if we are to gain the full benefit from poetry we must have the real estimate of it. I cast about for some mode of arriving in the present case at such an estimate without offence. And perhaps the best way is to begin as it is easy to begin with cordial praise.

When we find Chapman the Elizabethan translator of Homer expressing himself in his preface thus:

Though truth in her very nakedness sits in so deep a pit that from Gades to Auroia and Ganges few eyes can sound her, I hope yet those few here will so discover and confirm that the date being out of her darkness in this morning of our poet, he shall now gird his temples with the sun—we pronounce that such a prose is intolerable. When we find Milton writing: And long it was not after, when I was confirmed in this opinion that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem—we pronounce that such a prose has its own grandeur but that it is obsolete and inconvenient. But when we find Dryden telling us: What Virgil wrote in the vigour of his age in plenty and at ease I have undertaken to translate in my declining years struggling with wants oppressed with sickness curbed in my genius liable to be misconstrued in all I write—then we exclaim that here at last we have the true English prose, a prose such as we would all gladly use if we only knew how. Yet Dryden was Milton's contemporary.

But after the Restoration the time had come when our nation felt the imperious need of a fit prose. So too, the time had likewise come when our nation felt the imperious need of freeing itself from the absorbing preoccupation which religion in the Puritan age had exercised. It was impossible that this freedom should be brought about without some negative excess without some neglect and impairment of the religious life of the soul and the spiritual history of the eighteenth century shows us that the freedom was not achieved without them. Still the freedom was achieved, the preoccupation an undoubtedly baneful and retarding one if it had continued, was got rid of. And as with religion amongst us at that period so it was also with letters. A fit prose was a necessity but it was impossible that a fit prose should

establish itself amongst us without some touch of frost to the imaginative life of the soul. The needful qualities for a fit prose are regularity, uniformity, precision, balance. The men of letters whose destiny it may be to bring their nation to the attainment of a fit prose must of necessity whether they work in prose or in verse give a predominating almost exclusive attention to the qualities of regularity, uniformity, precision, balance. But an almost exclusive attention to these qualities involves some repression and silencing of poetry.

We are to regard Dryden as the puissant and glorious founder, Pope as the splendid high priest of our age of prose and reason of our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century. For the purposes of their mission and destiny then poetry like their prose is admirable. Do you ask me whether Dryden's verse take it almost where you will is not good?

A milk white Hind immortal and unchanged  
Fed on the lawns and in the forest ranged

I answer: Admirable for the purposes of the inauguration of an age of prose and reason. Do you ask me whether Pope's verse take it almost where you will is not good?

To Hounslow Heath I point and Banstead Down  
Thence comes your mutton and these chicks my own

I answer: Admirable for the purposes of the high priest of an age of prose and reason. But do you ask me whether such verse proceeds from men with an adequate poetic criticism of life from men whose criticism of life has a high seriousness or even without that high seriousness has poetic largeness freedom insight, benignity? Do you ask me whether the application of ideas to life in the verse of these men often a powerful application no doubt is a powerful poetic application? Do you ask me whether the poetry of these men has either the matter or the inseparable manner of such an adequate poetic criticism whether it has the accent of

Absent thee from felicity awhile

or of

And what is else not to be overcome

or of

O Martyr soulded in virginity!

I answer: It has not and cannot have them. It is the poetry of the builders of an age of prose and reason. Though they may write in verse though they may in a certain sense be masters of the art of versification, Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose.

Gray is our poetical classic of that literature and age, the position of Gray is singular and demands

a word of notice here. He has not the volume or the power of poets who coming in times more favourable have attained to an independent criticism of life. But he lived with the great poets; he lived above all with the Greeks through perpetually studying and enjoying them, and he caught their poetic point of view for regarding life caught then poetic manner. The point of view and the manner are not self-sprung in him; he caught them of others and he had not the free and abundant use of them. But whereas Addison and Pope never had the use of them, Gray had the use of them at times. He is the scriniest and frailest of classics in our poetry, but he is a classic.

And now after Gray we are met as we draw towards the end of the eighteenth century we are met by the great name of Burns. We enter now on times where the personal estimate of poets begins to be rife and where the real estimate of them is not reached without difficulty. But in spite of the disturbing pressures of personal partiality of national partiality let us try to reach a real estimate of the poetry of Burns.

By his English poetry Burns in general belongs to the eighteenth century and has little importance for us.

Mark ruffian Violence distain'd with crimes  
Rousing elate in these degenerate times  
View unsuspecting Innocence a prey  
As guileful Fraud points out the erring way  
While subtle Litigation's phant tongue  
The life blood equal sucks of Right and Wrong!

Evidently this is not the real Burns or his name and fame would have disappeared long ago. Nor is Clarinda's love poet, Sylvander, the real Burns either. But he tells us himself. These English songs gravel me to death. I have not the command of the language that I have of my native tongue. In fact I think that my ideas are more barren in English than in Scotch. I have been at *Duncan Gray* to dress it in English but all I can do is desperately stupid. We English turn naturally in Burns to the poems in our own language because we can read them easily but in those poems we have not the real Burns.

The real Burns is of course in his Scotch poems. Let us boldly say that of much of this poetry, a poetry dealing perpetually with Scotch drink, Scotch religion and Scotch manners, a Scotchman's estimate is apt to be personal. A Scotchman is used to this world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners, he has a tenderness for it, he meets its poet half way. In this tender mood he reads pieces like the *Holy Fair* or *Halloween*. But this world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion and Scotch manners is against a poet not for him, when it is not a partial countryman who reads him for in itself it is

not a beautiful world, and no one can deny that it is of advantage to a poet to deal with a beautiful world. Burns's world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion and Scotch manners is often a harsh, a sordid, a repulsive world even the world of his *Cotter's Saturday Night* is not a beautiful world. No doubt a poet's criticism of life may have such truth and power that it triumphs over its world and delights us. Burns may triumph over his world often he does triumph over his world but let us observe how and where Burns is the first case we have had where the bias of the personal estimate tends to mislead let us look at him closely he can bear it.

Many of his admirers will tell us that we have Burns convivial genuine, delightful, here—

Leeze me on drink! it gies us mair  
Than either school or college  
It kindles wit it waukens lair  
It pangs us fou o' knowledge  
Be't whisky gill or penny wheep  
Or ony stronger potion  
It never fails on drinking deep  
To kittle up our notion  
By night or day

There is a great deal of that sort of thing in Burns and it is unsatisfactory, not because it is bacchanalian poetry but because it has not that accent of sincerity which bacchanalian poetry to do it justice, very often has. There is something in it of bravado, something which makes us feel that we have not the man speaking to us with his real voice, something therefore poetically unsound.

With still more confidence will his admirers tell us that we have the genuine Burns, the great poet when his strain asserts the independence, equality, dignity of men, as in the famous song *For a that and a that*—

A prince can mak a belted knight  
A marquis duke and a that  
But an honest man's aboon his might  
Gude faith he mauna fa' that!  
For a that and a that  
Their dignities and a that  
The pith o' sense and pride o' worth  
Are higher rank than a that

Here they find his grand genuine touches and still more when this puissant genius who so often set morality at defiance falls moralising—

The sacred lowe o' weel placed love  
Luxuriantly indulge it  
But never tempt th' illicit rove  
Tho' naething should divulge it  
I waive the quantum o' the sin  
The hazard o' concealing

But och! it hardens a within  
And petrifies the feeling

Or in a higher strain—

Who made the heart tis He alone  
Decidedly can try us  
He knows each chord its various tone  
Each spring its various bias  
Then at the balance let's be mute  
We never can adjust it  
What's *done* we partly may compute  
But know not what's resisted

Or in a better strain yet, a strain his admirers will  
say, unsurpassable—

To make a happy fire side clime  
To weans and wife  
That's the true pathos and sublime  
Of human life

There is criticism of life for you, the admirers of Burns will say to us there is the application of ideas to life! There is, undoubtedly The doctrine of the last quoted lines coincides almost exactly with what was the aim and end Xenophon tells us of all the teaching of Socrates And the application is a powerful one, made by a man of vigorous understanding and (need I say?) a master of language

But for supreme poetical success more is required than the powerful application of ideas to life it must be an application under the conditions fixed by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty Those laws fix as an essential condition in the poet's treatment of such matters as are here in question, high seriousness—the high seriousness which comes from absolute sincerity The accent of high seriousness born of absolute sincerity, is what gives to such verse as

*In la sua voluntade è nostra pace*

to such criticism of life as Dante's its power Is this accent felt in the passages which I have been quoting from Burns? Surely not, surely if our sense is quick, we must perceive that we have not in those passages a voice from the very inmost soul of the genuine Burns he is not speaking to us from these depths he is more or less preaching And the compensation for admiring such passages less from missing the perfect poetic accent in them will be that we shall admire more the poetry where that accent is found

No Burns like Chaucer, comes short of the high seriousness of the great classics, and the virtue of matter and manner which goes with that high seriousness is wanting to his work At moments he touches it in a profound and passionate melancholy as in those four immortal lines taken by Byron as a motto for *The Bride of Abydos* but which have in

them a depth of poetic quality such as resides in no verse of Byron's own—

Had we never loved sae kindly  
Had we never loved sae blindly  
Never met or never parted  
We had neer been broken hearted

But a whole poem of that quality Burns cannot make the rest in the *Farewell to Nancy* is verbiage

We arrive best at the real estimate of Burns, I think by conceiving his work as having truth of matter and truth of manner but not the accent or the poetic virtue of the highest masters His genuine criticism of life when the sheer poet in him speaks, is ironic, it is not—

Thou Power Supreme whose mighty scheme  
These woes of mine fulfil  
Here firm I rest they must be best  
Because they are Thy will!

It is far rather *Whistle owre the lave o't!* Yet we may say of him as of Chaucer, that of life and the world as they come before him his view is large, free shrewd, benignant,—truly poetic therefore, and his manner of rendering what he sees is to match But we must note at the same time, his great difference from Chaucer The freedom of Chaucer is heightened in Burns, by a fiery reckless energy, the benignity of Chaucer deepens in Burns into an overwhelming sense of the pathos of things—of the pathos of human nature the pathos also of non human nature Instead of the fluidity of Chaucer's manner the manner of Burns has spring boundless swiftness Burns is by far the greater force though he has perhaps less charm The world of Chaucer is fairer, richer, more significant than that of Burns but when the largeness and freedom of Burns get full sweep, as in *Tam o' Shanter*, or still more in that puissant and splendid production, *The Jolly Beggars*, his world may be what it will, his poetic genius triumphs over it In the world of *The Jolly Beggars* there is more than hideousness and squalor there is bestiality, yet the piece is a superb poetic success It has a breadth, truth, and power which make the famous scene in Auerbach's Cellar, of Goethe's *Faust* seem artificial and tame beside it, and which are only matched by Shakespeare and Aristophanes

Here where his largeness and freedom serve him so admirably and also in those poems and songs where to shrewdness he adds infinite archness and wit, and to benignity infinite pathos where his manner is flawless and a perfect poetic whole is the result—in things like the address to the mouse whose home he had ruined in things like *Duncan Gray* *Tam Glen* *Whistle and I'll come to you my Lad*, *Auld Lang Syne* (this list might be made much longer)—here we have the genuine Burns, of whom

the real estimate must be high indeed Not a classic nor with the excellent *στοιχαιοτης* of the great classics nor with a verse rising to a criticism of life and a virtue like theirs but a poet with thorough truth of substance and an answering truth of style giving us a poetry sound to the core We all of us have a leaning towards the pathetic and may be inclined perhaps to prize Burns most for his touches of piercing sometimes almost intolerable pathos for verse like—

We twa hae paidl'd i the burn  
From mornin sun till dine  
But seas between us braid hae roar'd  
Sin auld lang syne

where he is as lovely as he is sound But perhaps it is by the perfection of soundness of his lighter and archer masterpieces that he is poetically most whole some for us For the votary misled by a personal estimate of Shelley as so many of us have been are and will be,—of that beautiful spirit building his many coloured haze of words and images

pinnacled dim in the intense mane—

no contact can be wholesomer than the contact with Burns at his archest and soundest Side by side with the

On the brink of the night and the morning  
My coursers are wont to respire  
But the Earth has just whispered a warning  
That their flight must be swifter than fire

of *Prometheus Unbound* how salutary how very salutary, to place this from *Tam Glen*—

My minnie does constantly deave me  
And bids me beware o young men  
They flatter she says to deceive me  
But wha can think sae o Tam Glen?

But we enter on burning ground as we approach the poetry of times so near to us—poetry like that of Byron Shelley, and Wordsworth—of which the estimates are so often not only personal but personal with passion For my purpose it is enough to have taken the single case of Burns the first poet we come to of whose work the estimate formed is evidently apt to be personal and to have suggested how we may proceed using the poetry of the great classics as a sort of touchstone to correct this estimate as we had previously corrected by the same means the historic estimate where we met with it A collection like the present with its succession of celebrated names and celebrated poems offers a good opportunity to us for resolutely endeavouring to make our estimates of poetry real I have sought to point out a

method which will help us in making them so, and to exhibit it in use so far as to put any one who likes in a way of applying it for himself

At any rate the end to which the method and the estimate are designed to lead and from leading to which if they do lead to it they get their whole value—the benefit of being able clearly to feel and deeply to enjoy the best, the truly classic in poetry,—is an end let me say it once more at parting of supreme importance We are often told that an era is opening in which we are to see multitudes of a common sort of readers and masses of a common sort of literature, that such readers do not want and could not relish anything better than such literature and that to provide it is becoming a vast and profitable industry Even if good literature entirely lost currency with the world, it would still be abundantly worth while to continue to enjoy it by oneself But it never will lose currency with the world in spite of monetary appearances it never will lose supremacy Currency and supremacy are insured to it not indeed by the world's deliberate and conscious choice but by something far deeper—by the instinct of self preservation in humanity

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1 Do you think of poetry as interpreting life for us as consoling us and as sustaining us? How would Plato react to this point of view?

2 Does science today need poetry as Arnold suggested? Would it make any difference to the work of physicists?

3 What does Arnold mean by poetry as the criticism of life? Does Shakespeare for example offer us a criticism of life and if so what is it? Is Gulliver Jenson better able to offer a criticism of life than Plato or Paul?

4 What does Arnold find wrong with the historical and personal approaches to poetry? Are his criticisms justified?

5 How does Eliot's definition of the classic and the classical differ from Arnold's? Which seems the preferable to you and why?

6 On what critical bases does Arnold choose his infallible touchstones? What do you think of these as suitable criteria for the judgment of poetry?

7 How does Eliot's account of eighteenth century literature compare and contrast with Arnold's? Which seems to you more just?

8 Do you agree with Arnold's estimate of Burns? On the basis of his discussion of Burns what would likely be Arnold's judgment of Byron Wordsworth and Shelley? What would he say of contemporary poetry—the poems let us say of Eliot and Auden?

9 With which of the other critics in the text is Arnold most closely allied with which does he most differ?

10 Has this essay on poetry helped you to a better understanding and judgment of poetry?





# The Making of a Poem

Stephen Spender

Stephen Spender has approached the difficult subject of the making of a poem with honesty and candor in an effort to isolate the components of poetic imagination and in so doing provides an excellent insight into the workings of a poet's mind. It is significant that Spender does not imply or state in his essay a particular theory of poetry—that is, he does not start from a preconception of what a poem should be or even of what a particular poem is going to be. He affirms unequivocally that such symbolic value as a poem may have is implicit in the original image and that the image is not contrived deliberately to act as a symbol. It is interesting to note that Spender's essay is completely subjective in its analysis; he tries to explain the intensely personal and individual experiences he has had in connection with the composition of his poems just as his poems themselves constitute highly personal reactions to the world. For the modern poet is primarily concerned with himself, thrown back upon himself by the complexity of events and the uncertainty of the moral order to a point where his work like Spender's is intensely subjective. What the contemporary poet has to offer in his poetry is himself. It is not therefore surprising that Spender, when he writes about the genesis of his work, should write primarily about himself. Poe, in contrast, in his essay *The Philosophy of Composition* states that he has in mind a certain end which he will offer to the reader in the shape of a finished poem. Spender offers nothing to the reader except a form of himself which he presumes to be sufficient to the uses of poetry in his generation.

## Apology

IT WOULD be inexcusable to discuss my own way of writing poetry unless I were able to relate this to a wider view of the problems which poets attempt to solve when they sit down at a desk or table to write or walk around composing their poems in their heads. There is a danger of my appearing to put across my own experiences as the general rule when every poet's way of going about his work and his experience of being a poet are different, and when my own poetry may not be good enough to lend my example any authority.

Yet the writing of poetry is an activity which makes certain demands of attention on the poet and which requires that he should have certain qualifications of ear, vision, imagination, memory and so on. He should be able to think in images; he should have as great a mastery of language as a painter has over his palette, even if the range of his language be very

limited. All this means that in ordinary society a poet has to adapt himself, more or less consciously to the demands of his vocation and hence the peculiarities of poets and the condition of inspiration which many people have said is near to madness. One poet's example is only his adaptation of his personality to the demands of poetry, but if it is clearly stated it may help us to understand other poets and even something of poetry.

Today we lack very much a whole view of poetry and have instead many one-sided views of certain aspects of poetry which have been advertised as the only aims which poets should attempt. Movements such as free verse, imagism, surrealism, expressionism, personalism and so on, tend to make people think that poetry is simply a matter of not writing in metre or of free association or of thinking in images or of a kind of drawing-room madness (surrealism) which corresponds to drawing-room communism. Here is a string of ideas: Night, dark stars, immensity, blue, voluptuous, clinging, columns, clouds, moon, sickle, harvest, vast, camp, fire, hell. Is this poetry? A lot of strings of words almost as simple as this are set down on the backs of envelopes and posted off to editors or to poets by the vast army of amateurs who think that to be illogical is to be poetic with that fond question. Thus I hope that this discussion of how poets work will imply a wider and completer view of poets.

## Concentration

The problem of creative writing is essentially one of concentration, and the supposed eccentricities of poets are usually due to mechanical habits or rituals developed in order to concentrate. Concentration, of course for the purposes of writing poetry, is different from the kind of concentration required for working out a sum. It is a focussing of the attention in a special way, so that the poet is aware of all the implications and possible developments of his idea, just as one might say that a plant was not concentrating on developing mechanically in one direction but in many directions towards the warmth and light with its leaves and towards the water with its roots all at the same time.

Schiller liked to have a smell of rotten apples concealed beneath the lid of his desk under his nose when he was composing poetry. Walter de la Mare has told me that he must smoke when writing. Auden drinks endless cups of tea. Coffee is my own addiction besides smoking a great deal which I hardly ever do except when I am writing. I notice also that as I attain a greater concentration, this tends to make me forget the taste of the cigarette in my mouth and then I have a desire to smoke two or even three cigarettes at a time in order that the sensation from

the outside may penetrate through the wall of concentration which I have built round myself

For goodness sake though do not think that rotten apples or cigarettes or tea have anything to do with the quality of the work of a Schiller or de la Maie, or an Auden. They are a part of a concentration which has already been attained rather than the causes of concentration. De la Maie once said to me that he thought the desire to smoke when writing poetry arose from a need not of a stimulus but to canalize a distracting leak of his attention away from his writing towards the distraction which is always present in one's environment. Concentration may be disturbed by someone whistling in the street or the ticking of a clock. There is always a slight tendency of the body to sabotage the attention of the mind by providing some distraction. If this need for distraction can be directed into one channel—such as the odor of rotten apples or the taste of tobacco or tea—then other distractions outside oneself are put out of competition.

Another possible explanation is that the concentrated effort of writing poetry is a spiritual activity which makes one completely forget for the time being, that one has a body. It is a disturbance of the balance of body and mind and for this reason one needs a kind of anchor of sensation with the physical world. Hence the craving for a scent or taste or even sometimes for sexual activity. Poets speak of the necessity of writing poetry rather than of a liking for doing it. It is spiritual compulsion, a straining of the mind to attain heights surrounded by abysses and it cannot be entirely happy for in the most important sense the only reward worth having is absolutely denied for however confident a poet may be he is never quite sure that all his energy is not misdirected nor that what he is writing is great poetry. At the moment when art attains its highest attainment it reaches beyond its medium of words or prints or music and the artist finds himself realizing that these instruments are inadequate to the spirit of what he is trying to say.

Different poets concentrate in different ways. In my own mind I make a sharp distinction between two types of concentration: one is immediate and complete; the other is plodding and only completed by stages. Some poets write immediately works which, when they are written, scarcely need revision. Others write their poems by stages, feeling their way from rough draft to rough draft until finally, after many revisions, they have produced a result which may seem to have very little connection with their early sketches.

These two opposite processes are vividly illustrated in two examples drawn from music. Mozart and Beethoven. Mozart thought out symphonies, quartets even scenes from operas, entirely in his head—

often on a journey or perhaps while dealing with pressing problems—and then he transcribed them in their completeness onto paper. Beethoven wrote fragments of themes in notebooks which he kept beside him working on and developing them over years. Often his first ideas were of a clumsiness which makes scholars marvel how he could at the end have developed from them such miraculous results.

Thus genius works in different ways to achieve its ends. But although the Mozartian type of genius is the more brilliant and dazzling, genius unlike virtuosity is judged by greatness of results not by brilliance of performance. The result must be the fullest development in a created aesthetic form of an original moment of insight and it does not matter whether genius devotes a lifetime to producing a small result if that result be immortal. The difference between two types of genius is that one type (the Mozartian) is able to plunge the greatest depths of his own experience by the tremendous effort of a moment; the other (the Beethovenian) must dig deeper and deeper into his consciousness layer by layer. What counts in either case is the vision which sees and pursues and attains the end, the logic of the artistic purpose.

A poet may be divinely gifted with a lucid and intense and purposive intellect; he may be clumsy and slow; that does not matter: what matters is integrity of purpose and the ability to maintain the purpose without losing oneself. Myself I am scarcely capable of immediate concentration in poetry. My mind is not clear, my will is weak. I suffer from an excess of ideas and a weak sense of form. For every poem that I begin to write I think of at least ten which I do not write down at all. For every poem which I do write down there are seven or eight which I never complete.

The method which I adopt therefore is to write down as many ideas as possible in however rough a form in notebooks (I have at least twenty of these on a shelf beside my desk, going back over fifteen years). I then make use of some of the sketches and discard others.

The best way of explaining how I develop the rough ideas which I use is to take an example. Here is a Notebook begun in 1944. About a hundred pages of it are covered with writing and from this have emerged about six poems. Each idea when it first occurs is given a number. Sometimes the ideas do not get beyond one line. For example No. 3 (never developed) is the one line—

*A language of flesh and roses*

I shall return to this line in a few pages, when I speak of inspiration. For the moment I turn to No. 13 because here is an idea which has been de-

veloped to its conclusion The first sketch begins thus —

- a) *There are some days when the sea lies like a harp  
Stretched flat beneath the cliffs The waves  
Like wires burn with the sun's copper glow  
[all the murmuring blue  
every silent]*

*Between whose spaces every image  
Of sky [field and] hedge and field and boat  
Dwells like the huge face of the afternoon  
[Lies]*

*When the heat grows tired the afternoon  
Out of the land may breathe a sigh  
[Across these wires like a hand They vibrate  
With]*

*Which moves across those wires like a soft hand  
[Then the vibration]  
Between whose spaces the vibration holds  
Every bird cry dog's bark man shout  
And creak of rollock from the land and sky  
With all the music of the afternoon*

Obviously these lines are attempts to sketch out an idea which exists clearly enough on some level of the mind where it yet eludes the attempt to state it. At this stage, a poem is like a face which one seems to be able to visualize clearly in the eye of memory but when one examines it mentally or tries to think it out feature by feature it seems to fade.

The idea of this poem is a vision of the sea. The faith of the poet is that if this vision is clearly stated it will be significant. The vision is of the sea stretched under a cliff. On top of the cliff there are fields hedges houses. Horses draw carts along lanes dogs bark far inland, bells ring in the distance. The shore seems laden with hedges, roses, houses and men all high above the sea on a very fine summer day when the ocean seems to reflect and absorb the shore. Then the small strung out glittering waves of the sea lying under the shore are like the strings of a harp which catch the sunlight. Between these strings lies the reflection of the shore. Butterflies are wafted out over the waves which they mistake for the fields of the chalky landscape searching them for flowers. On a day such as this the land reflected in the sea appears to enter into the sea as though it lies under it like Atlantis. The wires of the harp are like a seen music fusing seascape and landscape.

Looking at this vision in another way, it obviously has symbolic value. The sea represents death and eternity; the land represents the brief life of the summer and of one human generation which passes into the sea of eternity. But let me here say at once that although the poet may be conscious of this aspect of his vision, it is exactly what he wants to avoid stating or even being too concerned with. His

job is to recreate his vision and let it speak its moral for itself. The poet must distinguish clearly in his own mind between that which most definitely must be said and that which must not be said. The unsaid inner meaning is revealed in the music and the tonality of the poem and the poet is conscious of it in his knowledge that a certain tone of voice, a certain rhythm are necessary.

In the next twenty versions of the poem I felt my way towards the clarification of the seen picture, the music and the inner feeling. In the first version quoted above there is the phrase in the second and third lines

#### *The waves*

*Like wires burn with the sun's copper glow*

This phrase fuses the image of the sea with the idea of music and it is therefore a key phrase because the theme of the poem is the fusion of the land with the sea. Here then, are several versions of these one and a quarter lines in the order in which they were written —

- b) *The waves are wires  
Burning as with the secret song of fires*
- c) *The day burns in the trembling wires  
With a vast music golden in the eyes*
- d) *The day glows on its trembling wires  
Singing a golden music in the eyes*
- e) *The day glows on its burning wires  
Like waves of music golden to the eyes*
- f) *Afternoon burns upon its wires  
Lines of music dazzling the eyes*
- g) *Afternoon gilds its tingling wires  
To a visual silent music of the eyes*

In the final version, these two lines appear as in the following stanza —

- h) *There are some days the happy ocean lies  
Like an unfingered harp below the land  
Afternoon gilds all the silent wires  
Into a burning music of the eyes*

*On mirroring paths between those fine strung fires  
The shore laden with roses horses spurs  
Wanders in water imaged above ribbed sand*

#### *Inspiration*

The hard work evinced in these examples, which are only a fraction of the work put into the whole poem, may cause the reader to wonder whether there is no such thing as inspiration, or whether it is merely Stephen Spender who is uninspired. The answer is that everything in poetry is work except inspiration,

whether this work is achieved at one swift stroke as Mozart wrote his music or whether it is a slow process of evolution from stage to stage. Here again I have to qualify the word *work* as I qualified the word *concentration*: the work on a line of poetry may take the form of putting a version aside for a few days, weeks or years and then taking it up again when it may be found that the line has in the interval of time almost rewritten itself.

Inspiration is the beginning of a poem and it is also its final goal. It is the first idea which drops into the poet's mind and it is the final idea which he at last achieves in words. In between this start and this winning post there is the hard race, the sweat and toil.

Paul Valéry speaks of the *une ligne donnée* of a poem. One line is given to the poet by God or by nature; the rest he has to discover for himself.

My own experience of inspiration is certainly that of a line or a phrase or a word or sometimes something still vague, a dim cloud of an idea which I feel must be condensed into a shower of words. The peculiarity of the key word or line is that it does not merely attract as say the word *braggadocio* attracts. It occurs in what seems to be an active, male, germinal form as though it were the centre of a statement requiring a beginning and an end and as though it had an impulse in a certain direction. Here are examples —

*A language of flesh and roses*

This phrase (not very satisfactory in itself) brings to my mind a whole series of experiences and the idea of a poem which I shall perhaps write some years hence. I was standing in the corridor of a train passing through the Black Country. I saw a landscape of pits and pitheads, artificial mountains, jagged yellow wounds in the earth, everything transformed as though by the toil of an enormous animal or giant tearing up the earth in search of prey or treasure. Oddly enough a stranger next to me in the corridor echoed my inmost thought. He said, 'Everything there is man made.' At this moment the line flashed into my head.

*A language of flesh and roses*

The sequence of my thought was as follows: the industrial landscape which seems by now a routine and act of God which enslaves both employers and workers who serve and profit by it is actually the expression of man's will. Men willed it to be so and pitheads, slag heaps and the ghastly disregard of anything but the pursuit of wealth are a symbol of modern man's mind. In other words the world which we create—the world of slums and telegrams and newspapers—is a kind of language of our inner wishes and thoughts. Although this is so, it is ob-

viously a language which has got outside our control. It is a confused language, an irresponsible senile gibberish. This thought greatly distressed me and I started thinking that if the phenomena created by humanity are really like words in a language, what kind of language do we really aspire to? All this sequence of thought flashed into my mind with the answer which came before the question: *A language of flesh and roses*.

I hope this example will give the reader some idea of what I mean by inspiration. Now the line, which I shall not repeat again, is a way of thinking imaginatively. If the line embodies some of the ideas which I have related above, these ideas must be further made clear in other lines. That is the terrifying challenge of poetry. Can I think out the logic of images? How easy it is to explain here the poem that I would have liked to write! How difficult it would be to write it. For writing it would imply living my way through the imaged experience of all these ideas which here are mere abstractions and such an effort of imaginative experience requires a lifetime of patience and watching.

Here is an example of a cloudy form of thought germinated by the word *cross* which is the key word of the poem which exists formlessly in my mind. Recently my wife had a son. On the first day that I visited her after the boy's birth I went by bus to the hospital. Passing through the streets on the top of the bus they all seemed very clean, and the thought occurred to me that everything was prepared for our child. Past generations have toiled so that any child born today inherits with his generation cities, streets, organization, the most elaborate machinery for living. Everything has been provided for him by people dead long before he was born. Then naturally enough sadder thoughts colored this picture for me, and I reflected how he also inherited vast maladjustments, vast human wrongs. Then I thought of the child as like a pin point of present existence, the moment incarnate in whom the whole of the past and all possible futures *cross*. This word *cross* somehow suggested the whole situation to me of a child born into the world and also of the form of a poem about his situation. When the word *cross* appeared in the poem the idea of the past should give place to the idea of the future and it should be apparent that the *cross* in which present and future meet is the secret of an individual human existence. And here again the unspoken secret which lies beyond the poem, the moral significance of other meanings of the word *cross* begins to glow with its virtue that should never be said and yet should shine through every image in the poem.

This account of inspiration is probably weak beside the accounts that other poets might give. I am writing of my own experience, and my own in-

spiration seems to me like the faintest flash of insight into the nature of reality beside that of other poets whom I can think of. However it is possible that I describe here a kind of experience which however slight it may be is far truer to the real poetic experience than Aldous Huxley's account of how a young poet writes poetry in his novel *Time Must Have a Stop*. It is hard to imagine anything more self-conscious and unpoetic than Mr. Huxley's account.

### Memory

If the art of concentrating in a particular way is the discipline necessary for poetry to reveal itself, memory exercised in a particular way is the natural gift of poetic genius. The poet above all else is a person who never forgets certain sense impressions which he has experienced and which he can re-live again and again as though with all their original freshness.

All poets have this highly developed sensitive apparatus of memory and they are usually aware of experiences which happened to them at the earliest age and which retain their pristine significance throughout life. The meeting of Dante and Beatrice when the poet was only nine years of age is the experience which became a symbol in Dante's mind around which the *Divine Comedy* crystallized. The experience of nature which forms the subject of Wordsworth's poetry was an extension of a childhood vision of natural presences which surrounded the boy Wordsworth. And his decision in later life to live in the Lake District was a decision to return to the scene of these childhood memories which were the most important experiences in his poetry. There is evidence for the importance of this kind of memory in all the creative arts and the argument certainly applies to prose which is creative. Sir Osbert Sitwell has told me that his book *Before the Bombardment* which contains an extremely civilized and satiric account of the social life of Scarborough before and during the last war was based on his observations of life in that resort before he had reached the age of twelve.

It therefore is not surprising that although I have no memory for telephone numbers, addresses, faces and where I have put this morning's correspondence I have a perfect memory for the sensation of certain experiences which are crystallized for me around certain associations. I could demonstrate this from my own life by the overwhelming nature of associations which, suddenly aroused, have carried me back so completely into the past, particularly into my childhood that I have lost all sense of the present time and place. But the best proofs of this power of memory are found in the odd lines of poems written

in notebooks fifteen years ago. A few fragments of unfinished poems enable me to enter immediately into the experiences from which they were derived, the circumstances in which they were written and the unwritten feelings in the poem that were projected but never put into words.

*Knowledge of a full sun  
That runs up his big sky above  
The hill then in those trees and throws  
His smiling on the turf*

That is an incomplete idea of fifteen years ago and I remember exactly a balcony of a house facing a road, and on the other side of the road, pine trees beyond which lay the sea. Every morning the sun sprang up first of all above the horizon of the sea then it climbed to the tops of the trees and shone on my window. And this memory connects with the sun that shines through my window in London now in spring and early summer. So that the memory is not exactly a memory. It is more like one prong upon which a whole calendar of similar experiences happening throughout years, collect. A memory once clearly stated ceases to be a memory; it becomes perpetually present because every time we experience something which recalls it, the clear and lucid original experience imposes its formal beauty on the new experiences. It is thus no longer a memory but an experience lived through again and again.

Turning over these old notebooks, my eye catches some lines, in a projected long poem which immediately re-shape themselves into the following short portrait of a woman's face —

*Her eyes are gleaming fish  
Caught in her nervous face as if in a net  
Her hair is wild and fair haloing her cheeks  
Like a fantastic flare of Southern sun  
There is madness in her cherishing her children  
Sometimes perhaps a single time in years  
Her wandering fingers stoop to arrange some flowers—  
Then in her hands her whole life stops and weeps*

It is perhaps true to say that memory is the faculty of poetry because the imagination itself is an exercise of memory. There is nothing we imagine which we do not already know. And our ability to imagine is our ability to remember what we have already once experienced and to apply it to some different situation. Thus the greatest poets are those with memories so great that they extend beyond their strongest experiences to their minutest observations of people and things far outside their own self-centredness (the weakness of memory is its self-centredness hence the narcissistic nature of most poetry).

Here I can detect my own greatest weakness. My memory is defective and self-centred. I lack the con-

confidence in using it to create situations outside myself although I believe that in theory there are very few situations in life which a poet should not be able to imagine because it is a fact that most poets have experienced almost every situation in life. I do not mean by this that a poet who writes about a Polar Expedition has actually been to the North Pole. I mean though that he has been cold, hungry, etc. so that it is possible for him by remembering imaginatively his own felt experiences to know what it is like to explore the North Pole. That is where I fail. I cannot write about going to the North Pole.

### Faith

It is evident that a faith in their vocation, mystical in intensity, sustains poets. There are many illustrations from the lives of poets to show this, and Shakespeare's sonnets are full of expressions of his faith in the immortality of his lines.

From my experience I can clarify the nature of this faith. When I was nine we went to the Lake District and there my parents read me some of the poems of Wordsworth. My sense of the sacredness of the task of poetry began then, and I have always felt that a poet's was a sacred vocation like a saint's. Since I was nine I have wanted to be various things, for example Prime Minister (when I was twelve). Like some other poets I am attracted by the life of power and the life of action, but I am still more repelled by them. Power involves forcing oneself upon the attention of historians by doing things and occupying offices which are in themselves, important so that what is truly powerful is not the soul of a so-called powerful and prominent man but the position which he fills and the things which he does. Similarly the life of action which seems so very positive is in fact, a selective, even a negative kind of life. A man of action does one thing or several things because he does not do something else. Usually men who do very spectacular things fail completely to do the ordinary things which fill the lives of most normal people, and which would be far more heroic and spectacular perhaps if they did not happen to be done by many people. Thus in practice the life of action has always seemed to me an act of cutting oneself off from life.

Although it is true that poets are vain and ambitious, their vanity and ambition are of the purest kind, attainable in this world, for the saint renounces ambition. They are ambitious to be accepted for what they ultimately are as revealed by their innermost experiences, their finest perceptions, their deepest feelings, their uttermost sense of truth in their poetry. They cannot cheat about these things because the quality of their own being is revealed not in the noble sentiments which their poetry expresses, but in

sensibility, control of language, rhythm and music, things which cannot be attained by a vote of confidence from an electorate or by the office of Poet Laureate. Of course work is tremendously important but in poetry even the greatest labor can only serve to reveal the intrinsic qualities of soul of the poet as he really is.

Since there can be no cheating, the poet, like the saint, stands in all his works before the bar of a perpetual day of judgment. His vanity, of course, is pleased by success, though even success may contribute to his understanding that popularity does not confer on him the favorable judgment of all the ages which he seeks. For what does it mean to be praised by one's own age which is soaked in crimes and stupidity, except perhaps that future ages, wise where we are foolish, will see him as a typical expression of this age's crimes and stupidity? Nor is lack of success a guarantee of great poetry, though there are some who pretend that it is. Nor can the critics, at any rate beyond a certain limited point of technical judgment, be trusted.

The poet's faith is therefore, firstly, a mystique of vocation, secondly, a faith in his own truth combined with his own devotion to a task. There can really be no greater faith than the confidence that one is doing one's utmost to fulfill one's high vocation, and it is this that has inspired all the greatest poets. At the same time this faith is coupled with a deep humility because one knows that ultimately judgment does not rest with oneself. All one can do is to achieve nakedness, to be what one is with all one's faculties and perceptions, strengthened by all the skill which one can acquire, and then to stand before the judgment of time.

In my Notebooks I find the following Prose Poem which expresses these thoughts:

*Bring me peace bring me power bring me assurance. Let me reach the bright day, the high chair, the plain desk where my hand at last controls the words where anxiety no longer undermines me. If I don't reach these I'm thrown to the wolves. I'm a restless animal wandering from place to place from experience to experience.*

*Give me the humility and the judgment to live alone with the deep and rich satisfaction of my own creating, not to be thrown into doubt by a word of spite or disapproval.*

*In the last analysis don't mind whether your work is good or bad so long as it has the completeness, the enormity of the whole world which you love.*

### Song

Inspiration and song are the irreducible final qualities of a poet which make his vocation different from all others. Inspiration is an experience in which a line or an idea is given to one, and perhaps also a

state of mind in which one writes one's best poetry. Song is far more difficult to define. It is the music which a poem as yet unthought of will assume the empty womb of poetry for ever in the poet's consciousness waiting for the fertilizing seed.

Sometimes when I lie in a state of half waking half sleeping I am conscious of a stream of words which seem to pass through my mind without then having a meaning but they have a sound a sound of passion or a sound recalling poetry that I know. Again sometimes when I am writing the music of the words I am trying to shape takes me far beyond the words I am aware of a rhythm, a dance, a fury which is as yet empty of words.

In these observations, I have said little about head aches midnight oil pints of beer or of claret, love affairs and so on which are supposed to be stations on the journeys of poets through life There is no doubt that writing poetry when a poem appears to succeed results in an intense physical excitement a sense of release and ecstasy On the other hand I dread writing poetry for I suppose the following reasons a poem is a terrible journey a painful effort of concentrating the imagination words are an extremely difficult medium to use, and sometimes when one has spent days trying to say a thing clearly one finds that one has only said it dully above all, the writing of a poem brings one face to face with one's own personality with all its familiar and clumsy limitations In every other phase of existence one can exercise the orthodoxy of a conventional routine one can be polite to one's friends one can get through the day at the office one can pose, one can draw attention to one's position in society one is—in a word—dealing with men In poetry one is wrestling with a god

Usually when I have completed a poem I think this is my best poem and I wish to publish it at once. This is partly because I only write when I have something new to say which seems more worth while than what I have said before partly because optimism about my present and future makes me despise my past. A few days after I have finished a poem I relegate it to the past of all my other wasted efforts all the books I do not wish to open.

Perhaps the greatest pleasure I have got from poems that I have written is when I have heard some lines quoted which I have not at once recognized. And I have thought how good and how interesting before I have realized that they are my own.

In common with other creative writers I pretend that I am not, and I am exceedingly affected by unsympathetic criticism whilst praise usually makes me suspect that the reviewer does not know what he is talking about. Why are writers so sensitive to criticism? Partly because it is their business to be

sensitive and they are sensitive about this as about other things. Partly because every serious creative writer is really in his heart concerned with reputation and not with success (the most successful writer I have known Sir Hugh Walpole was far and away the most unhappy about his reputation because the highbrows did not like him). Again I suspect that every writer is secretly writing for *some one* probably for a parent or teacher who did not believe in him in childhood. The critic who refuses to understand immediately becomes identified with this person and the understanding of many admirers only adds to the writer's secret bitterness if this on refusal persists.

Gradually one realizes that there is always this someone who will not like one's work. Then perhaps literature becomes a humble exercise of faith, being all that one can be in one's art of being more than oneself, expecting little but with a faith in the mystery of poetry which gradually expands into faith in the mysterious service of truth.

Yet what failures there are! And how much mud sticks to one mud not thrown by other people but acquired in the course of earning one's living and answering or not answering the letters which one receives supporting or not supporting public cause. All one can hope is that this mud is composed of little grains of sand which will produce pearls.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 Compare Spender's attitude with that of T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden
- 2 What does Spender imply as a theory of the function of a poem?
- 3 What does Spender mean when he says that inspiration is the beginning of a poem and it is also its final goal?
- 4 Compare the subjectivity of Spender's writing and approach with that of Eliot, Kafka, and Joyce. Especially compare Spender's problems with those of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.



## *Some Elements of Poetry*

It is a common notion that poetry is something which rhymes and which has a certain regular beat and to many people it is in the possession of these characteristics that poetry differs from prose. It is



not hard to understand why such a conception should be prevalent as much poetry does in fact have rhyme and rhythm. But it is not rhyme and rhythm which distinguish poetry from other forms of writing. There is a large body of poetry which has no rhyme at all and which does not possess any regular or significant rhythm or beat. It is important to learn to consider poetry as a very definite, unique and particular way of expressing and transmitting ideas. There is in other words a poetic method of expression which is distinct from all other methods of expression and it is in this method that poetry defines itself in its special way.

Essential to all poetry is the fact that in a poem words are not for the most part used in what we may call their literal sense. If we stop for a moment to consider the usual methods of linguistic communication we will perceive that we employ a series of symbols called words which stand for actions, objects or relationships in the external world. Thus when we read on a bottle of medicine "Take two capsules after each meal" there is little confusion in our minds about the intent and meaning of the directions. "Capsule" is a symbol for the unit of medicine, "two" tells us how many units, "take" informs us that we are to swallow these units, "after" tells us that the swallowing must be preceded by something else, "meal" tells us what this something is and "each" informs us that we are to swallow the pills every time a meal has been eaten. Such a set of directions constitutes an excellent example of language in its literal sense, serving as a means of communicating ideas. By far the greater part of our use of language in conversation and in ordinary writing is of this literal sort and it is for this reason that accustomed to the simple prose of the newspapers and conventional stories on the one hand and to the usual variety of speech on the other we tend to bring to our reading of poetry the same set of assumptions. We look in other words for literal meaning and in so looking succeed in blinding ourselves to the entire poetic experience.

The fact is that while poetry makes use of words and is composed of words for the most part these words do not have literal meaning alone. In poetry the words are often surcharged with what may be called connotation. For example the word "home" has a literal meaning of a dwelling place or a house but it carries with it to many people a connotation of warmth, security, peace and friendliness. The well known song "Home Sweet Home" would hardly be as popular under the title of "House Sweet House" even though as far as the dictionary is concerned the two terms are synonymous. In addition to this connotative use of words the poet relies for his expression upon imagery—that is he often uses a word or a group of words which is designed to call up an

image in the reader's mind. But the mind fortunately is not confined to images which are merely reflections of external reality—on the contrary we are quite capable of seeing in our minds images which have no reality in the world at all.

Consider in this regard these lines from Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress":

But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near

In the first place, *Time* which is after all an abstract notion, here takes on the characteristics of a person. This technique, known as *personification*, is a device which enables us to attribute to an object or an idea those qualities which we ordinarily associate with individuals. In these lines the character *Time* is stated as having or as being in a winged chariot. Now the word "chariot" in its literal sense refers of course to a certain two wheeled vehicle of Roman days but it has come down to our own day with a connotation of speed, power and onrushing motion. If we imagine a chariot powerful and fast and then imagine it with a pair of wings you can see that the connotation of speed and power has been reinforced and made stronger because to it we have added the idea of flight through the air with all that this implies of unimpeded motion. While there is no external real chariot in the world with wings the image of such a vehicle is not hard to bring to mind and you will notice that the poet's desire to express the onrushing pursuit of time is thus admirably fulfilled.

In order then to perceive what the poet is trying to tell us we must remember that he is using words in a special sense which is not literal and which is designed to call up in our minds certain images through which we will understand. Prose does not depend for successful communication upon imagery even though it may often use it but poetry is a mode of expression which makes the fullest use of the imaginative powers of the reader. It may seem to be a rather simple thing to advise but one of the most direct ways for getting at the significance of a poem is to call to mind, in as literal a way as you can the images which the poet suggests. In this way, the reader is participating in the same process and thus allowing himself fully to share the poet's experience.

For this reason poetry is the ideal vehicle for the expression of abstract rather than concrete ideas. The poet is striving often to delineate, express, explain and illuminate a feeling, an attitude, an idea which the very literal quality of prose makes it impossible to convey. We have seen that the poet uses language in its connotative sense and that he uses words to create images. But an image, no matter how powerful, cannot alone have meaning unless it serves to shed light upon the subject of the poem. It must be

related to the idea, the feeling the abstraction which the poet wishes to express and the most common form of this relationship is the *analogy*

We use the analogy often in our usual speech when we wish to make something especially clear. We say that somebody eats like a bird when we want to express the idea of picking at small quantities of food. We do not mean this literally; that is, it is not our intention to suggest that in every respect—beak, motion, diet and all—there is a direct resemblance. But we ask the listener to consider the general attributes of a bird eating and to apply these to the person whose eating habits we are describing. We use this approach because the prose forms, "He pecks at his food" or "He eats small amounts of food," do not do ample justice to the idea. Recognizing the need for expressing an entire abstract concept and recognizing at the same time the inadequacy of literal language, we have recourse to a very simple form of the poetic method of analogy.

It can be deduced from this, therefore, that a poem primarily functions to express an abstraction through analogy to the concrete, or to put it another way, to describe the unknown by reference to the known. A poem therefore seeks to indicate an analogous relationship which to the reader, or to the non-poet, might not have been noticed or conceived. And always the result of the indication of this analogous relationship is to clarify, express, or illuminate an abstract concept. To illustrate this technique, let us take a very simple line:

My love is like a red red rose

In the first place, it is quite clear that this is not to be read literally—in the external, objective world there is no relationship between love and roses. In this respect the essential character of the poetic method is underscored, for although the form is the same, the following line is literal and in the realm of prose:

My house is like John's house

The meaning here is clear, unequivocal, and direct. The line "My love is like a red red rose" thus differs in its essential character from the similar prose line. But notice that it does say something about the nature or character of love: that it has a resemblance to a red rose. Of these two concepts, love and rose, one is abstract, the other concrete. The former is an experience which many of us have had, but which, precisely because it is a complex and subtle series of feelings, emotions, and reactions, we find it difficult to describe; the latter is a concrete flower with which we have come into contact and to which we have a variety of reactions. The line, then, is designed to explain the abstract and unfamiliar in terms of the concrete and familiar. It

is, however, quite clear that since there is no obvious relationship, we must consider the general image and the general connotation of a rose. A rose has many attributes: thorniness, redness, delicacy, scent, frailty, shyness, perhaps outgoingness, form, shape, design. It is beautiful, often lovely, sometimes light, sometimes heavy. We can immediately see that many of these attributes which come to mind when we call up an image of a rose can have no possible relevance. Certainly the poet does not wish us to think that his love is red and probably not that his love has scent. So the analogy of love to the rose is not to the entire rose but to a single element or aspect of the rose. Now let us suppose that his love is a shy thing which opens up only under warm encouragement. His second line might then explain this to us by selecting that one characteristic of the rose from among the many that might come to mind. In other words, the poem in such an instance opens with a general image which is later on particularized and made more precise. You will notice with little difficulty that the subtle and abstract notion of a tender or shy love is expressed by analogy to a known phenomenon and becomes clear when the two are juxtaposed.

To follow the poetic method in practice, let us consider in detail the sonnet of Shakespeare which begins:

- 1 That time of year thou may'st in me behold
- 2 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
- 3 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
- 4 Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
- 5 In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
- 6 As after sunset fadeth in the west
- 7 Which by and by black night doth take away
- 8 Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
- 9 In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
- 10 That on the ashes of his youth doth lie
- 11 As the death-bed whereon it must expire
- 12 Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
- 13 This thou perceiv'st which makes thy love more strong
- 14 To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

The poet opens with a statement about himself which introduces the general subject matter with which the poem is to be concerned. He is saying that it is possible to perceive in him a certain season of the year, which is that season when yellow leaves or none, or few, do hang. Now it is clear that the only season which is characterized by yellow leaves is Autumn, and that in lines 1 and 2 the poet has expressed the idea that he is in the Autumn of his life. But the image of Autumn, or rather the response to the image of Autumn which a reader may have, is not a simple nor yet an inevitable one. Depending upon the reader, his experiences and his emotions, Autumn may be a kindly and lovely season, a sad

season because it marks the end of a joyful Summer a terrible time because Winter is coming again. The poet may not risk allowing the reader to have a *free response* because this response might be quite contrary to his intention. He must therefore *direct the response* so that he and the reader may remain in harmony. Line 3 makes a general image of Autumn more precise by bringing in the image of cold and of shaking boughs which effectively disposes of any kindly or warm reaction to the season. Line 4 carries this still further through the use of some of the devices we have mentioned. Notice that line 4 places three words in juxtaposition: *bare ruined choir*. Now in its literal sense, the word *choir* denotes a group of persons singing generally in a church or upon some devotional occasion and *choir* has in addition a connotation of human warmth, faith, group activity, friendliness and richness. *Ruin* calls to mind some stark and battered or crumbled building and gives us a feeling of horror and chill at whatever caused the disaster. When we place next to each other the idea of *ruin* and the essentially living and vibrant concept *choir*, we get a reinforced concept of coldness of finality and of the passage of time—much for the same reason that in wartime the wreck of a church or of a school somehow fills us with a greater horror than the collapse of an ordinary building, precisely because the contrast between what such a building once housed and what it is now is so sharp. *Bare* of course emphasizes the nakedness and the emptiness of the ruined choir. Yet it is not a ruined choir in the literal sense but rather an image which the poet is asking the reader to conceive of a tree limb upon which sweet birds recently sang as human beings might sing in a choir. The first four lines of the poem then present a single image of Autumn as a bare cold sad season which stands in sharp contrast to what has gone before and which marks the coming cessation of life which the Winter will entail. This single image is built up of a general image of the season to which are added more precise connotations and the secondary image of the limbs shaking against the cold where late the sweet birds sang.

The fifth line following the same order as line 1 describes the poet in terms of twilight. Again a free response to the image of twilight might produce in the reader an impression contrary to the poet's intention as twilight can variously suggest soft evening, darkness, the coming of dread night, the end of the day, or a variety of reactions and attitudes. Lines 7 and 8 serve to emphasize the single quality of twilight which the poet wishes us to apprehend: the fact that it is the end of the day, a period of time which comes just before night. Death's second self (a counterpart, in other words, of Death) comes to take it away. Notice how 'black night' in line 7

connotes the idea of death and final sleep—an idea which is emphasized by seals up all in rest (encloses and isolates from the external world) of line 8. In this way the general image of twilight made more precise as the prelude to the end constitutes the single image of the second group of four lines or the second *quatrain*.

The third quatrain presents the same idea in terms of a fire. Here again a free response to the image of fire possibly leading the reader astray, the poet directs the response to one aspect of a fire: its embers. Note how glowing in line 9 and ashes in line 10 contribute to this image.

Now in each of the three quatrains of this Shakespearean sonnet (a Shakespearean sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines divided 4 4 4 2) the abstraction of the state or circumstances of the poet has been likened to three distinct images—Autumn, Twilight and Embers. In order to arrive at the ultimate significance of these first twelve lines it is necessary to find what these three images have *in common*. In the external objective world there appears to be no resemblance or affinity among a season, a time of day and a fire but if we think carefully we can see that each of them constitutes within its own frame of reference, an image of *ending*. That is to say: Autumn is to seasons what twilight is to days, what embers are to fires, the period just before the final end followed, of course by Winter, night and ashes. So from these three separate images a large single final image emerges—that of ending or of dying. You will readily perceive that in this way the poet is stating where he is with respect to his own life but he is not simply saying that he is old or that he is on the point of death. On the contrary, he is at a particular point in his life which is best represented by reference to the seasons—advanced in years, not young, past perhaps, his prime, but still removed from the end by a not inconsiderable distance.

However, the sum total of the first twelve lines is merely to acquaint us with the state of the poet. As yet nothing has been said about this state nor has any comment been made. It is to the last two lines known as *rhymed couplet* to which we must turn for the poet's comment. This in line 13 refers to all that we have mentioned so far: the sum total of the complete image. And the poet says in effect in the final couplet that *despite* this he will be loved even the more strongly because the very fact that he is not long for the world will make such love more strong. Notice that the final couplet implies the word *despite*, for under ordinary circumstances one would expect love to be weaker where it can exist for only a short span of time. But as Cleanth Brooks has pointed out in many of his writings, poetry is concerned with paradox or irony.

Poetry tends to say that things are other than they seem and to suggest or indicate a paradoxical ironical circumstance which runs contrary to expectation or the ordinary run of experience. Here I am suggesting Shakespeare in a condition where ordinarily it would be thought that I should be loved the less but the very condition which gives rise to such expectation is the reason why I shall be loved more strongly. And in this paradoxical comment the poet suggests a number of things about human relationships which it would be hard, if possible at all, adequately to express in expository prose.

We have been spending a good deal of time in this discussion on the matter of arriving at what might be said to be the external meaning of a piece of poetry. These general principles may be applied regardless of the form or length of a poem (for example, note that in Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress* the introduction of the problem begins in line 33) for in different forms of poetry it is the structure rather than the technique which changes. In a long poem the images may be multiplied and remultiplied; in a short poem there is a strict limit of space. In a long poem the introduction may occupy many lines while in a short poem it is obvious that it can occupy only a few. The poetic process of communication, the poem as an entity in itself as a single experience and a unique impact is a special and wonderful mode of expression.

Poetry, however like all literature is subject to another type of analysis which is divorced from matters of method and treatment. We have seen how one goes about the business of receiving the poet's communication and of understanding him, but this does not imply that we must accept what he says without question. Like all writing poetry says something to us and if we are critical and discriminating, we should respond to what it says according to certain standards. There are poems which are badly done, whose images are absurd, whose meter is lame, whose language is cheap. There are also poems which are structurally sound and yet which present points of view to which we might object. There is in other words no obligation to suspend judgment merely because we are faced with a poem—on the contrary we have an obligation to judge provided we judge from understanding and not from prejudice or simple lack of comprehension.

One of the things which we can derive from poetry is a knowledge of the climate of opinion in which it was written and in the selections which follow in this book you will find poems grouped according to *idea*. Thomas Hood for example conceives human misery as a personal thing brought about in the main by unhappy circumstance. The essential tragedy of his heroine is the fact that she is forlorn in a city

which ignores her but there is no effort on Hood's part to go beyond her individual unhappiness to seek the cause in a maladjusted society. For Hood wrote in the nineteenth century out of a background of social optimism which held in effect that unhappiness was usually the unfortunate lot of the individual rather than the result of a badly functioning social order. Yet Longfellow, viewing the Jewish graves, senses the tragedy and the sorrow not of an individual but of a whole people and goes further to suggest that this sorrow stems from the callousness and the cruelty of their persecutors. John Donne in *Death Be Not Proud* is postulating in unmistakable terms his deep belief in eternal life after death, while in *To His Coy Mistress* Marvell suggests as an overtone to his entire thought the finality of death and the consequent need for living every moment of life to the full, which is echoed again by Tennyson in *Ulysses*. Wordsworth's *Lucy* poems are expressive not only of his personal feeling but of the revolt against urbanization and civilization which the Industrial Revolution with its attendant squalor and human misery was instrumental in causing. Kenneth Fearing in *No Credit* and W. H. Auden in *The Unknown Citizen* are writing out of a horror of the impersonal materialistic monolithic state, which we of the twentieth century know much too well in all its depersonalizing and inhumane aspects.

Thus we must be aware not only of the *explicit* meanings of poems which we can derive through an understanding of the poetic method and a knowledge of poetic form and device but of the *implicit* meanings as well. As you read, think of what the poem tells you of attitudes, assumptions and concepts of the world. There is a reason why John Donne would not write today as he did in his own time and why the seventeenth century could not possibly have produced a T. S. Eliot. It is good that this should be so for writing is primarily an expression, an affirmation of one's own day to one's own contemporaries. The past never knew us and we will not be here to worry about posterity. To express ourselves in our own day is the only road to universality.

As in any art there is a technical language which is used in discussions of poetry and our ability to understand is increased if we comprehend the terms. This section presents in brief form some of the more typical and frequent problems of English poetic nomenclature and scansion.

In English verse lines may contain one or more feet, a *foot* being the interval between two metrical beats or stresses. Lines may be classified according to the number of feet they contain and this classification tells us what *meter* they are written in. Thus

a line containing one foot is written in *monometer* two feet in *dimeter* etc. The principal English meters are

1	<i>Monometer</i>	One foot
2	<i>Dimeter</i>	Two feet
3	<i>Trimeter</i>	Three feet
4	<i>Tetrameter</i>	Four feet
5	<i>Pentameter</i>	Five feet
6	<i>Hexameter</i>	Six feet
7	<i>Heptameter</i>	Seven feet

In order to determine the meter of a line it is necessary only to count the number of feet it contains. Thus

That time/of year/thou mayst/in me/behold/  
contains five separate feet and is thus written in *pentameter*. The line

A thing/of beau/ty is/a joy/

contains four feet and is written in *tetrameter*.

Now *verse feet* are classified according to the pattern of stress of the syllables they contain. A foot may consist of two or three syllables. It is called *duple* if it contains two syllables, and *triple* if it contains three syllables. Within each foot one syllable only is stressed or accented; the remaining syllable or syllables are unstressed. Sometimes the stressed syllable is known as *long* and the unstressed syllable as *short*. The stressed syllable is generally indicated by – and the unstressed by ∪ in common notation. The most common types of poetic feet in English are

- 1 *Iambic* Two syllables of which the first is unstressed and the second is stressed as  
Póo! sôul/the cén/ter ôf/my sín/fúl  
eáth (Shakespeare)
- 2 *Trochaic* Two syllables of which the first two are unstressed and the third is stressed, as  
What bëcámë/of yôur blôod/hôunds  
my hând/some young mán?  
(Lord Randall)
- 3 *Dactylic* Three syllables of which the first is stressed and the last two unstressed as  
Cánnôn tó/right ôf them  
Cánnôn tó/left ôf them  
(Tennyson)
- 4 *Spondaic* Two syllables of equal stress and duration, as  
Slow spon/dee stalks/strong foot/  
(Coleridge)

In describing a line therefore it is necessary to classify it by the type of foot and by the number of feet. The line

Avenge/O Lord/thy slought/ered  
saints/whose bones

(Milton)

contains five iambic feet and is hence in *iambic pentameter*. A line in *iambic tetrameter* is

There is/a gai/den in/heir face

(Campion)

Examples of other types of line follow

I am mon/arch of all/I survey

(Anapestic trimeter)

Grind away/moisten and/mash up  
thy/paste

(Dactylic tetrameter)

Special names have been given to various stanza types and verse forms of which the most common are

- Blank verse* Unrhymed iambic pentameters
- Of that forbidden tree whose mortal  
taste  
Brought death into the World and  
all our woe  
With loss of Eden till one greater  
Man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful  
seat  
(*Paradise Lost*)
- Couplet* Two rhymed lines. When the lines are in iambic pentameter they form an *heroic couplet*.
- Tercet* Three rhymed lines
- Quatrain* A four line stanza
- Sonnet* A fourteen line poem. The two most frequent types are
- a *English or Shakespearean sonnet* Three quatrains followed by a rhymed couplet. The rhyme scheme is abab cdcd efef gg
  - b *Italian or Petrarchan sonnet* One eight line stanza the *octave* followed by a six line stanza or *sestet*. The rhyme scheme is abba abba in the octave and highly variable in the sestet.

## THE POEMS

### *Philomela and the Poets*

Each of the five poems in this group deals with the same simple and single theme—the nightingale. The poems are based on the same source—the legend of the rape of Philomela by Tereus and her subsequent metamorphosis into the nightingale. Each poet hears the song of the same bird; each responds to it in his own way and each makes the nightingale the symbol of a different aspect of experience. The sound of the bird, strained through the differing sensibilities of the five poets, results in five poems which differ from each other in structure, style, and significance. The plan of Sidney reminds him of his own unrequited love.

But I who daily craving  
Cannot have to content me  
Have more cause to lament me  
Since wanting is more woe than  
too much having

But the same cry recalls to Barnfield the futility of man

For her griefs so lively shown  
Made me think upon mine own

Therefore

Whilst as fickle fortune smiled  
Thou and I were both beguiled

One poet composes an artificial and brittle love song with its conventional refrain—Thy thorn without, my thorn, my heart invadeth—the other speaks out in sober and straightforward style

He that is thy friend indeed  
He will help thee in thy need

Keats hears the song of the bird in the dreamworld of his imagination. A drowsy numbness pains my sense. Preoccupied with the thought of death, he sees in the nightingale the symbol of the triumph of eternal beauty over death.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down

In that dream state between waking and sleeping, Keats's imagination freely wanders and ranges in faery lands forlorn from the classical tale of the ravished Philomela to the Biblical Ruth who sick for home stood among the alien corn. Not less passionate than Keats is Matthew Arnold, but his passion is controlled and subdued, rejecting the richly orchestrated imagery of Keats. Arnold tells again the sad tale in simple, almost bare style.

Dost thou again peruse  
With hot cheeks and seared eyes  
The too clear web and thy dumb sister's shame?

But behind the thin veil of his restraint, Arnold's passion burns in a clear flame. He hears in the song of the nightingale the eternal passion and the eternal pain of man. Finally, for Ransom, the bird connotes the symbol of the change and shift in culture from the old and traditional continent of Europe to the new and raw continent of America.

### The Nightingale

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

The nightingale, as soon as April bringeth  
Unto her rested sense a perfect waking  
While late bare earth proud of new clothing springeth,  
Sings out her woes, a thorn her song-book making,  
And mournfully bewailing. 5

Her throat in tunes expresseth  
What grief her breast oppresseth  
For Tereus' force on her chaste will prevailing  
O Philomela, fail! O take some gladness  
That here is juster cause of plentiful sadness. 10  
Thine earth now springs mine fadeth  
Thy thorn without, my thorn, my heart invadeth

Alas, she hath no other cause of anguish  
But Tereus' love on her by strong hand wroken  
Wherein she suffering, all her spirits languish. 15  
Full womanlike complains her will was broken  
But I who daily craving,  
Cannot have to content me  
Have more cause to lament me

Since wanting is more woe than too much having  
O Philomela, fail! O take some gladness. 21  
That here is juster cause of plentiful sadness  
Thine earth now springs mine fadeth  
Thy thorn without, my thorn, my heart invadeth

### An Ode

RICHARD BARNFIELD

As it fell upon a day  
In the merry month of May,  
Sitting in a pleasant shade  
Which a grove of myrtles made  
Beasts did leap and birds did sing. 5  
Trees did grow and plants did spring,  
Everything did banish moan  
Save the nightingale alone

She poor bird as all forlorn  
 Leaned her breast up till a thorn  
 And there sung the dolefull st ditty,  
 That to hear it was great pity  
*Fie fie fie* now would she cry,  
*Teru teru* by and by  
 That to hear her so complain  
 Scarce I could from tears refrain  
 For her griefs so lively shown  
 Made me think upon mine own  
 Ah thought I thou mournst in vain  
 None takes pity on thy pain  
 Senseless trees that cannot hear thee  
 Ruthless bears they will not cheer thee  
 King Pandion he is dead  
 All thy friends are lapped in lead  
 All thy fellow birds do sing  
 Careless of thy sorrowing  
 Whilst as fickle fortune smiled  
 Thou and I were both beguiled  
 Every one that flatters thee  
 Is no friend in misery  
 Words are easy, like the wind  
 Faithful friends are hard to find  
 Every man will be thy friend  
 Whilst thou hast wherewith to spend,  
 But if store of crowns be scant,  
 No man will supply thy want  
 If that one be prodigal  
 Bountiful they will him call  
 And with such like flattering  
 Pity but he were a king  
 If he be addict to vice  
 Quickly him they will entice,  
 If to women he be bent,  
 They have at commandment  
 But if fortune once do frown  
 Then farewell his great renown  
 They that fawned on him before  
 Use his company no more  
 He that is thy friend indeed  
 He will help thee in thy need  
 If thou sorrow he will weep  
 If thou wake he cannot sleep  
 Thus of every grief in heart  
 He with thee doth bear a part  
 These are certain signs to know  
 Faithful friend from flattering foe

## Ode to a Nightingale

JOHN KEATS

My heart aches and drowsy numbness pains  
 My sense as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains

One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk  
 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot  
 But being too happy in thine happiness—  
 That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees  
 In some melodious plot  
 Of beechen green and shadows numberless  
 Singest of summer in full-throated ease  
 O for a draught of vintage! that hath been  
 Cooled a long age in the deep delved earth  
 Tasting of Flora and the country green  
 Dance and Provençal song and sunburnt mirth!  
 O for a beaker full of the warm South  
 Full of the true the blushful Hippocrene  
 With beaded bubbles winking at the brim  
 And purple-stained mouth  
 That I might drink and leave the world unseen  
 And with thee fade away into the forest dim  
 Fade away dissolve and quite forget  
 What thou among the leaves hast never known  
 The weariness the fever and the fret  
 Here where men sit and hear each other groan  
 Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs  
 Where youth grows pale and specter-thin and dies  
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
 And leaden-eyed despairs  
 Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes  
 Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow  
 Away! away! for I will fly to thee  
 Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards  
 But on the viewless wings of Poesy  
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards  
 Already with thee! tender is the night  
 And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne  
 Clustered around by all her starry Fays  
 But here there is no light  
 Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
 Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways  
 I cannot see what flowers are at my feet  
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs  
 But in embalméd darkness guess each sweet  
 Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
 The grass the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild  
 White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine  
 Fast-fading violets covered up in leaves  
 And mid-May's eldest child,  
 The coming musk-rose full of dewy wine,  
 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves

Darling I listen and for many a time  
 I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
 Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,



To take into the air my quiet breath,  
 Now more than ever seems it rich to die 55  
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain  
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
 In such an ecstasy!  
 Still wouldst thou sing and I have ears in vain—  
 To thy high requiem become a sod 60

Thou wast not born for death immortal Bird!  
 No hungry generations tread thee down,  
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
 In ancient days by emperor and clown 65  
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
 Through the sad heart of Ruth when, sick for  
 home  
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn,  
 The same that oft times hath  
 Charmed magic casements opening on the foam  
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn 70

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell  
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self!  
 Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
 As she is famed to do deceiving elf  
 Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades 75  
 Past the near meadows over the still stream  
 Up the hill side and now 'tis buried deep  
 In the next valley glades  
 Was it a vision or a waking dream?  
 Fled is that music—Do I wake or sleep? 80

## Philomela

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Hark ah the nightingale—  
 The tawny throated!  
 Hark, from that moonlit cedar what a burst!  
 What triumph! hark!—what pain!  
 O wanderer from a Grecian shore 5  
 Still, after many years in distant lands  
 Still nourishing in thy bewildered brain  
 That wild unquenched, deep sunken old world  
 pain—  
 Say, will it never heal?  
 And can this fragrant lawn 10  
 With its cool trees and night  
 And the sweet tranquil Thames  
 And moonshine and the dew  
 To thy racked heart and brain  
 Afford no balm? 15

Dost thou tonight behold  
 Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,  
 The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?

Dost thou again peruse  
 With hot cheeks and seared eyes 20  
 The too clear web and thy dumb sister's shame?  
 Dost thou once more assay  
 Thy flight and feel come over thee,  
 Poor fugitive the feathery change  
 Once more and once more seem to make resound  
 With love and hate, triumph and agony 26

Lone Daulis and the high Cephissian vale?  
 Listen, Eugenia—  
 How thick the bursts come crowding through the  
 leaves!  
 Again—thou hearest? 30  
 Eternal passion!  
 Eternal pain!

## Philomela

JOHN CROWE RANSOM

Procne Philomela and Itylus  
 Your names are liquid your improbable tale  
 Is recited in the classic numbers of the nightingale  
 Ah, but our numbers are not felicitous  
 It goes not liquidly for us 5  
 Perched on a Roman ilex and duly apostrophized  
 The nightingale descanted unto Ovid  
 She has even appeared to the Teutons the swilled  
 and gravid  
 At Fontainebleau it may be the bird was gallicized,  
 Never was she baptized 10

To England came Philomela with her pain  
 Fleeing the hawk her husband querulous ghost  
 She wanders when he sits heavy on his roost,  
 Utters herself in the original again,  
 The untranslatable refrain 15

Not to these shores she came! this other Thrace  
 Environ barbarous to the royal Attic  
 How could her delicate dirge run democratic,  
 Delivered in a cloudless boundless public place  
 To an inordinate race? 20

I pernотated with the Oxford students once  
 And in the quadrangles in the cloisters on the Cher  
 Precociously knocked at antique doors ajar,  
 Fatuously touched the hems of the hierophants  
 Sick of my dissonance 25

I went out to Bagley Wood I climbed the hill,  
 Even the moon had slanted off in a twinkling  
 I heard the sepulchral owl and a few bells tinkling

There was no more villainous day to unfulfil,  
The diuturnity was still 30

Up from the darkest wood where Philomela sat  
Her fairy numbers issued What then ailed me?  
My ears are called capacious but they failed me  
Her classics registered a little flat!  
I rose and venomously spat 35

Philomela, Philomela lover of song  
I am in despair if we may make us worthy  
A bantering breed sophisticated and swaithy  
Unto more beautiful persistently more young,  
Thy fabulous provinces belong 40



## *And Tell He Must His Tale* *Narrative*

This group of poems is centered around the narrative each poem tells a tale but each poet tells his story in a different way and for different purposes The Pardoner's Tale is deceptively simple at first glance it seems nothing more than a medieval exhortation to avoid sin and it would appear that Chaucer is doing no more than retelling a tale of great antiquity and popularity But when we put the story in its proper perspective it takes on other and more sophisticated values We have to recall what Chaucer has told us of the Pardoner in the Prologue the Pardoner who to prove that he is newly arrived from Rome sings in his high pitched voice Com hider love to me who wears his yellow hair long and

No berd hadde he ne never sholde have  
As smothe it was as it were late y shave  
I trow he were a gelding or a mare

Selling his faked relics and his pigs bones to ignorant and credulous peasants he contrives to make parsons and people alike his apes, but he was in churche a noble ecclesiaste Thus when we contrast the depravity of his character so mordantly etched by Chaucer with the high moral tone of his tale we realize what a delicious irony is at work here Contrasted with the art of the frame work of The Pardoner's Tale the ballad which follows appears artless in the extreme but its simplicity is the result of the compression and intensity given it by endless telling and retelling The story is reduced to its bare bones, nothing superfluous has been retained and nothing essential has been omitted The tale proceeds by a series of vivid and sharply presented pictures to an inevitable climax of tremendous emotional power and the characters are drawn in a few clean and decisive strokes

How memorable are the scenes in Little Musgrave and

Ladye Barnarde the meeting the lovers caught the fight over in two strokes of the sword the bold defiance of Ladye Barnarde Properly to feel the full power of Little Musgrave and Ladye Barnarde one should listen to the American version of the ballad as sung by John Jacob Niles

The stirring poem by Tennyson *The Revenge* is a sophisticated poet's attempt to recapture the style and spirit of the old ballad what it lacks in spontaneity and warmth it makes up in skill and polish and it does catch the English pride in the splendor of English achievement Finally we learn from the rollicking ballad of Frankie and Johnny that the impulse to ballad making is to our great fortune not at all dead raw as the poem is it tells its tale with the true ballad technique of sharp picture strong character and swift motion And all who have sung it will realize how essential melody is to the complete realization of a ballad

## *The Pardoner's Tale*

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

### *The Wordes of the Hooste to the Phisicien and the Pardoner*

Oure Hooste gan to swere as he were wood  
Harrow! quod he 'by nayles and by blood!  
This was a fals cheil and a fals justise  
As shameful deeth as herte kan devyse 5  
Come to thise juges and hire advocatz!  
Algate this sely mayde is slayn allas!  
Allas to deere broughte she beauteel  
Wherfore I seye al day that men may see  
That yiftes of Fortune and of Nature 10  
Been cause of deeth to many a creature  
Of bothe yiftes that I speke of now  
Man han ful ofte moore harm than prow  
But trewely, myn owene maister deere  
This is a pitous tale for to heere  
But nathelees passe over, is no fors 15  
I pray to God to save thy gentil cors  
And eek thyne uryals and thy jurdones  
Thyn ypocras and eek thy galiones,  
And every boyste ful of thy letuarie  
God blesse hem, and oure lady Seint Marie! 20  
So moot I theen thou art a propre man  
And lyk a prelat by Seint Ronyan!  
Seyd I nat wel? I kan nat speke in terme,  
But wel I woot thou doost myn herte to erme,  
That I almost have caught a cardynacle 25  
By corpus bones! but I have triacle

2 nayles etc (of Christ) 15 is etc no matter! 17 uryals etc (vessels for examining urine) 18 ypocras etc (medicines named perhaps by the Host after ancient physicians) 19 boyste box letuarie medicine 23 in terme (in correct medical terms) 24 erme ache 25 cardynacle (in error for cardiacle disease of the heart) 26 corpus bones (the Host is inventing an oath) triacle a restorative

Or elles a draughte of moyste and corny ale  
 Or but a heere anon a myrie tale  
 Myn herte is lost for pitee of this mayde  
 Thou beel amy thou Pardonere he syde 30  
 Telle us som myrthe or japes ight anon  
 It shal be doon quod he by Semt Ronyon!  
 But first quod he heere at this ale stake  
 I wol bothe dynke and eten of a cake  
 But right anon thise gentils gonne to crye 35  
 Nay, lat hym telle us of no ribaudye!  
 Telle us som moral thyng, that we may leere  
 Som wit and thanne wol we gladly heere  
 I gyaunte ywis quod he, but I moot thynke  
 Upon som honest thyng while that I drynke 40

*Heere folweth the Prologe of the Pardoners Tale*

Lordynges—quod he—in churches whan I preche  
 I peyne me to han an hauteyn speche  
 And ryng it out as round as gooth a belle  
 For I kan al by rote that I telle  
 My theme is alwey oon, and evere was 45  
*Radix malorum est cupiditas*

First I pronounce whennes that I come,  
 And thanne my bulles shewe I alle and some  
 Oure lige lordes seel on my patente  
 That shewe I first my body to warente 50  
 That no man be so boold ne preest ne clerk  
 Me to destourbe of Cristes hooly werk  
 And after that thanne telle I forth my tales  
 Bulles of popes and of cardynailes  
 Of patriarkes and bisshopes I shewe 55  
 And in Latyn I speke a wordes fewe,  
 To saffron with my predicacioun  
 And for to stire hem to devocioun  
 Thanne shewe I forth my longe cristal stones,  
 Ycrammed ful of cloutes and of bones — 60  
 Relikes been they as, wenen they echoon  
 Thanne have I in latoun a sholder boon  
 Which that was of an hooly Jewes sheep

Goode men I seye taak of my wordes keep  
 If that this boon be wasshe in any welle 65  
 If cow or calf or sheep or oxe swelle  
 That any worm hath ete or worm ystonge,  
 Taak water of that welle and wassh his tonge  
 And it is hool anon and forthermoor  
 Of pokkes and of scabbe and every soor 70  
 Shal every sheep be hool that of this welle  
 Drynketh a draughte Tak kep eek what I telle

If that the goode man that the beestes oweth  
 Wol every wyke, er that the cok hym croweth

27 moyste etc fresh and strong 30 beel amy good friend 33 ale  
 stake ale house 36 ribaudie ribaldry 42 hauteyn bold manner of  
 45 theme text 48 bulles papal warrants 49 lige lordes i.e. the  
 Pope's patente (cf Pr 1 315) 52 destourbe of hinder in 57 to give  
 color to my sermon 59 cristal stones glass containers 60 cloutes  
 rags 62 latoun (cf Pr 1 699) 63 Jewes (one of the Patriarchs?)  
 67 worm snake etc bitten 70 pokkes pox 73 oweth owns 74 wyke  
 week

Fastynge drynken of this welle a draughte 75  
 As thulke hooly Jew oure eldies taughte  
 His beestes and his stoor shal multiple  
 And sires also it heeleth jalousie  
 For though a man be falle in jalous rage  
 Lat maken with this water his potage 80  
 And nevere shal he moore his wyf mystruste  
 Though he the soothe of hir defaute wiste  
 Al had she taken preestes two or thre  
 Heere is a miteyn eek that ye may se  
 He that his hand wol putte in this mitayn 85  
 He shal have multiplying of his grayn,  
 Whan he hath sown be it whete or otes,  
 So that he offre pens, or elles grotes

Goode men and wommen o thyng warne I yow  
 If any wight be in this churche now 90  
 That hath doon synne horrible, that he  
 Dar nat for shame of it, yshriven be  
 Or any womman be she yong or old,  
 That hath ymaked hir housbond cokewold  
 Swich folk shal have no power ne no grace 95  
 To offren to my relikes in this place  
 And whoso fyndeth hym out of swich blame  
 They wol come up and offre in Goddes name  
 And I assoille hem by the auctoritee  
 Which that by bulle ygraunted was to me 100

By this gaude have I wonne yeer by yeer  
 An hundred mark sith I was pardonere  
 I stonde lyk a clerk in my pulpet  
 And whan the lewed peple is down yset  
 I preche so as ye han herd bifoore, 105  
 And telle an hundred false japes moore  
 Than peyne I me to strecche forth the nekke  
 And est and west upon the peple I bekke  
 As dooth a dowve sittynge on a berne  
 Myn handes and my tonge goon so yerne 110  
 That it is joye to se my bisynesse  
 Of avarice and of such cursednesse  
 Is al my prechyng, for to make hem free  
 To yeven hir pens,—and namely unto me  
 For myn entente is nat but for to wynne 115  
 And nothyng for correccioun of synne  
 I rekke nevere, whan that they been beryed  
 Though that hir soules goon a blakeberyed

For certes many a predicacioun  
 Comth ofte tyme of yvel entencioun 120  
 Som for plesance of folk and flaterye  
 To been avaunced by ypocrisie,  
 And som for veyne glorie and som for hate  
 For whan I dar noon oother weyes debate  
 Thanne wol I styngne hym with my tonge smerte 125

77 stoor stock 80 lat maken have made 81 mystriste distrust  
 82 defaute misconduct 83 though she had taken two or three  
 priests (as lovers) 84 miteyn mitten 88 offre offer (to the Par  
 doner) 92 yshriven be confess 94 ymaked etc betrayed her hus  
 band 97 whoever is not in such a situation 101 gaude trick 102  
 hundred mark (at least \$8000) 108 bekke nod 109 berne barn 110  
 yerne fast 118 a blakeberyed astray 119 predicacioun sermon 124  
 debate fight 125 hym (an enemy)

In prechyng so that he shal nat asteite  
 To been defamed falsly if that he  
 Hath trespassed to my bretheren or to me  
 For though I telle noght his propre name  
 Men shal wel knowe it is the sime  
 By signes and by othere circumstances  
 Thus quyte I folk that doon us displesances  
 Thus spitte I out my venym undeir hewe  
 Of hoolynesse to semen hooly and trewe  
 But shortly myn entente I wol devyse  
 I preche of nothyng but for coveityse  
 Therfore my theme is yet, and evere was  
*Radix malorum est cupiditas*  
 Thus kan I preche agayn that same vice  
 Which that I use and that is avarice  
 But though myself be guilty in that synne,  
 Yet kan I maken oother folk to twynne  
 From avarice and soore to repente  
 But that is nat my principal entente,  
 I preche nothyng but for coveitise  
 Of this mateere it oghte ynogh suffice  
 Thanne telle I hem ensamples many oon  
 Of olde stories longe tyme agoon  
 For lewed peple loven tales olde  
 Swiche thynges kan they wel reporte and holde  
 What trowe ye that whiles I may preche  
 And wynne gold and silver for I teche,  
 That I wol lyve in poverte wilfully?  
 Nay nay I thoughte it nevere trewely!  
 For I wol preche and begge in sondry landes,  
 I wol nat do no labour with myne handes  
 Ne make baskettes and lyve therby  
 By cause I wol nat beggen ydelly  
 I wol noon of the apostles countrefete  
 I wol have monye wolles, chese and whete  
 Al were it yeven of the pouereste page  
 Or of the pouereste wydwe in a village  
 Al sholde hir children sterve for famyne  
 Nay, I wol drynke licour of the vyne  
 And have a joly wenche in every toun  
 But herkneth lordynges in conclusioun  
 Youre likyng is that I shal telle a tale  
 Now have I dronke a draughte of corny ale  
 By God I hope I shal vow telle a thyng  
 That shal by resoun been at youre likyng  
 For though myself be a ful vicious man  
 A moial tale yet I yow telle kan  
 Which I am wont to preche for to wynne  
 Now hoold youre pees! my tale I wol bigynne

*Heere bigynneth the Pardoner's Tale*

In Flaundres whilom was a compaignye  
 Of yonge folk that haunteden folye,

128 bretheren fellow pardoners (?) 132 quyte repay 142 twynne  
 part 151 the whiles while 152 for etc by my preaching 153 wil  
 fully voluntarily 158 ydelly in vain 176 haunteden indulged in

As not, hasard stywes and taverines  
 Where as with harpes lutes and gyternes  
 They daunce and pleyen at dees bothe day and  
 nyght  
 And eten also and drynken over hir myght  
 Thurgh which they doon the devel sacrificise  
 Whithinne that develes temple in cused wise  
 By superfluytee abhomynable  
 Hir othes been so grete and so dampnable  
 That it is gisly for to heere hem swere  
 Owre blissed Lordes body they to teie —  
 Hem thoughte that Jewes rente hym noght ynough  
 And ech of hem at otheres synne lough  
 And ight anon thanne comen tombesteres  
 Fetys and smale and yonge frutesteres  
 Syngeres with harpes, baudes wafereres,  
 Wiche been the verray develes officeres  
 To kyndle and blowe the fyr of lecherye,  
 That is annexed unto glotonye  
 The hooly writ take I to my witnesse  
 That luxurie is in wyn and dronkenesse  
 Lo how that dionken Looth unkyndely  
 Lay by his doghtres two, unwityngly  
 So dionke he was he nyste what he wroghte  
 Herodes—whoso wel the stories soghte—  
 Whan he of wyn was repleet at his feeste  
 Right at his owene table he yaf his heeste  
 To sleen the Baptist John ful gilteles  
 Senec seith a good word doutelees  
 He seith he kan no difference fynde  
 Bitwix a man that is out of his mynde  
 And a man which that is dronkelewe,  
 But that woodnesse yfallen in a shrewe,  
 Persevereth lenger than doth dronkenesse  
 O glotonye ful of cursednesse!  
 O cause first of oure confusioun!  
 O original of oure dampnacioun,  
 Til Crist hadde boght us with his blood agayn!  
 Lo how deere shortly for to sayn,  
 Aboght was thulke cursed vileynye!  
 Corrupt was al this world for glotonye  
 Adam oure fader, and his wyf also,  
 Fro Paradys to labour and to wo  
 Were dryven for that vice it is no drede  
 For whil that Adam fasted as I rede  
 He was in Paradys and whan that he  
 Eet of the fruyt defendend on the tree  
 Anon he was out cast to wo and peyne  
 O glotonye on thee wel oghte us pleyne!  
 O wiste a man how manye maladves  
 Folwen of excesse and of glotonyes,

177 stywes brothels 178 gyternes guitars 186 to tere dismember  
 (in swearing by its parts) 189 tombesteres female acrobats 190  
 fetys shapely frutesteres wenches selling fruit 191 baudes pro  
 curers wafereres confectioners 194 annexed allied 196 luxurie lust  
 197 unkyndely unnaturally 200 whoso etc whoever examines the  
 stories (will discover) 207 dronkelewe drunk 208 woodnesse mad  
 ness in upon 211 (cf ll 217 9) 225 wiste a man if a man knew

He wolde been the moore mesurable  
 Of his diete sittinge at his table  
 Allas! the shorte throte, the tendre mouth,  
 Maketh that est and west and north and south  
 In erthe, in air, in water, men to swynke 231  
 To gete a glotoun deynthe mete and drynke  
 Of this matiere O Paul wel kanstow trete  
 Mete unto wombe and wombe eek unto mete  
 Shal God destroyen bothe as Paulus seith 235  
 Allas! a foul thyng is it by my feith  
 To seye this word, and fouler is the dede,  
 Whan man so drynketh of the white and rede  
 That of his throte he maketh his pryvee  
 Thurgh thilke cursed superfluitee 240  
 The apostel wepyng seith ful pitously  
 Ther walken manye of whiche yow toold have I—  
 I seye it now wepyng with pitous voys—  
 They been enemys of Cristes croys, 244  
 Of whiche the ende is deeth, wombe is hir god!  
 O wombe! O bely! O stynkyng cod,  
 Fulfilled of dong and of corrupcioun!  
 At either ende of thee foul is the soun  
 How greet labour and cost is thee to fynde!  
 These cookes, how they stampe, and streyne, and  
 grynde 250  
 And turnen substaunce into accident,  
 To fulfillen al thy likerous talent!  
 Out of the harde bones knocke they  
 The mary for they caste noght away 254  
 That may go thurgh the golet softe and soote  
 Of spicerie of leef and bark, and roote  
 Shal been his sauce ymakyd by delit,  
 To make hym a newer appetit  
 But certes, he that haunteth swiche delices  
 Is deed whil that he lyveth in tho vices 260  
 A lecherous thyng is wyn and dronkenesse  
 Is ful of stryving and of wrecchednesse  
 O dronke man, disfigured is thy face  
 Sour is thy breeth, foul artow to embrace, 264  
 And thurgh thy dronke nose semeth the soun  
 As though thou seydest ay Sampson Sampson!  
 And yet, God woot, Sampson drank nevere no wyn  
 Thou fallest as it were a styked swyn,  
 Thy tonge is lost, and al thy honeste cure,  
 For dronkenesse is veray sepulture 270  
 Of mannes wit and his discrecioun  
 In whom that drynke hath dominacioun  
 He kan no conseil kepe it is no drede  
 Now kepe yow fro the white and fro the rede,  
 And namely fro the white wyn of Lepe 275  
 That is to selle in Fysshstrete or in Chepe

234 wombe belly 238 white etc (wine) 246 cod bag 247 Fulfilled  
 filled full 248 soun sound 249 fynde provide for 251 i.e. completely  
 transform the nature of things 252 likerous talent greedy appetite  
 254 mary marrow 255 soote sweetly 259 haunteth (cf. l. 176)  
 delices delights 269 honeste cure regard for decency 275 Lepe in  
 Spain 276 to selle for sale Chepe (cf. Pr. l. 754)

This wyn of Spaigne crepeth subtilly  
 In othere wyne growynge faste by,  
 Of which ther ryseth swich fumositee 279  
 That whan a man hath dronken draughtes the  
 And weneth that he be at hoom in Chepe  
 He is in Spaigne right at the toun of Lepe,—  
 Nat at the Rochele ne at Budeux toun,  
 And thanne wol he seyn Sampson, Sampson!  
 But herkneth lordynges o word, I yow preeye  
 That alle the sovereyn actes, dar I seye 286  
 Of victories in the Olde Testament  
 Thurgh verray God, that is omnipotent  
 Were doon in abstinence and in prayere,  
 Loketh the Bible and ther ye may it leere 290  
 Looke Attila the grete conquerour  
 Deyde in his sleep with shame and dishonour  
 Bledynge ay at his nose in dronkenesse  
 A capitayn sholde lyve in sobrenesse  
 And over al this avyseth yow right wel 295  
 What was comaunded unto Lamuel—  
 Nat Samuel but Lamuel, seye I—  
 Redeth the Bible, and fynde it expresly  
 Of wyn-yevyng to hem that han justice  
 Namore of this for it may wel suffice 300  
 And now that I have spoken of glotonye  
 Now wol I yow deffenden hasardrye  
 Hasard is verray mooder of lesynges  
 And of deceite and cursed forswerynges 304  
 Blaspheme of Crist, manslaughter and wast also  
 Of catel and of tyme and forthermo  
 It is repreeve and contrarie of honour  
 For to ben holde a commune hasardour  
 And ever the hyer he is of estaat  
 The moore is he holden desolaat 310  
 If that a prynce useth hasardrye  
 In alle governaunce and policye  
 He is as by commune opinioun,  
 Yholde the lasse in reputacioun  
 Stilboun that was a wys embassadour, 315  
 Was sent to Corynthe in ful greet honour,  
 Fro Lacydomye to make hire alliaunce  
 And whan he cam, hym happede par chaunce  
 That alle the gretteste that were of that lond,  
 Pleyynge atte hasard he hem fond, 320  
 For which, as soone as it myghte be,  
 He stal hym hoom agayn to his contree  
 And seyde Ther wol I nat lese my name  
 Ne I wol nat take on me so greet defame  
 Yow for to allie unto none hasardours 325  
 Sendeth othere wise embassadours  
 For, by my trouthe me were levere dye  
 Than I yow sholde to hasardours allye

277 ff (The Pardoner ironically suggests that the infusion of the  
 stronger and cheaper Spanish wines in French wines sold in Lon-  
 don was not the work of avaricious vintners but took place in the  
 vineyards) 278 faste close 279 fumositee fumes of drunkenness  
 295 avyseth yow take note 296 Lamuel Lemuel 299 han i.e. ad-  
 minister 303 lesynges lies 307 repreeve shame 310 desolaat lost

For ye, that been so glorious in honours,  
 Shal nat allye yow with hasardous  
 As by my wyl ne as by my treete  
 This wise philosophre, thus seyde hee  
 Looke eek that to the kyng Demetrius  
 The kyng of Parthes as the book seith us  
 Sente him a pane of dees of gold in scorn  
 For he hadde used hasard ther biforn  
 For which he heeld his glorie or his renoun  
 At no value or reputacioun  
 Loides may fynden oother maner pley  
 Honeste ynough to dyve the day away  
 Now wol I speke of others false and giete  
 A word or two as olde bookes tiete  
 Giet sweryng is a thyng abhominable  
 And fals sweryng is yet moore reprevable  
 The heighe God forbad sweryng at al  
 Witnesse on Mathew but in special  
 Of sweryng seith the hooly Jeremye  
 Thou shalt swere sooth thyne othes and nat lye  
 And swere in doom and eek in rightwisnesse  
 But ydel sweyng is a cursednesse  
 Bihoold and se that in the firste table  
 Of heighe Goddes heestes honuuable  
 How that the seconde heeste of hym is this  
 Take nat my name in ydel or amys  
 Lo rather he forbedeth swich sweryng  
 Than homycide or many a cursed thyng  
 I seye that as by ordie thus it stondeth  
 This knowen that hise heestes understondeth  
 How that the seconde heeste of God is that  
 And forther over I wol thee telle al plat  
 That vengeance shal nat parten from his hous  
 That of his othes is to outrageous  
 'By Goddes precious herte and By his nayles  
 And By the blood of Crist that is in Hayles  
 Sevene is my chaunce and thyn is cynk and treye!  
 By Goddes armes, if thou falsly pleye,  
 This daggere shal thurghout thyn herte go!  
 This fruyt cometh of the bicched bones two  
 Forsweyng, ire, falsnesse, homycide  
 Now, for the love of Crist, that for us dyde  
 Lete youre othes bothe grete amd smale!  
 But sires now wol I telle forth my tale  
 These notowes thre of whiche I telle  
 Longe eist er prime rong of any belle,  
 Were set hem in a taverne to drynke  
 And as they sat, they herde a belle clynke  
 Biforn a cors was caried to his grave  
 That oon of hem gan callen to his knave

Go bet quod he and axe redily  
 Wh it cors is this that passeth hee forby  
 And looke that thou repute his name weel  
 Sire quod this boy it nedeth never a deel  
 It was me toold er ye cam heer two houes  
 He was paidee an old felawe of youre  
 And sodeynly he was yslayn to nyght  
 Fordionke as he sat on his bench uprigh  
 Ther cam a privee thief men clepeth Deeth  
 That in this contree al the peple sleeth  
 And with his spere he smoot his herte atwo  
 And wente his wey withouten wordes mo  
 He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence  
 And maister er ye come in his presence  
 Me thynketh that it were necessarie  
 For to be war of swich an adversaie  
 Beth redy for you to meete hym everemooie  
 Thus taughte me my dame I sey namooie  
 By Seinte Marie! seyde this taverne  
 The child seith sooth for he hath slayn this yce  
 Henne over a mile, withinne a greet villige  
 Bothe man and womman child and hyne and page  
 I trowe his habitacioun be there  
 To been avysed greet wysdom it were  
 Ei that he dide a man a dishonour  
 Ye Goddes armes! quod this notou  
 Is it swich peril with hym for to meete?  
 I shal hym seke by wey and eek by strete  
 I make avow to Goddes digne bones!  
 He kneth felawes we thie been al ones  
 Lat ech of us holde up his hand til oother,  
 And ech of us bicomem otheres brother  
 And we wol sleen this false traytour Deeth  
 He shal be slayn, he that so manye sleeth  
 By Goddes dignitee ere it be nyght!  
 Togidres han thise thre hir trouthes plight  
 To lyve and dyen ech of hem for oother,  
 As though he were his owene ybore brother  
 And up they stirte al dronken in this rage,  
 And forth they goon towards that village  
 Of which the taverne hadde spoke biforn,  
 And many a grisly ooth thanne han they sworn  
 And Cristes blessed body they to-rente  
 Deeth shal be deed if that they may hym hente!  
 Whan they han goon nat fully alf a mile  
 Right as they wolde han troden over a stile  
 An oold man and a poure with hem mette  
 This olde man ful mekely hem grette,  
 And seyde thus, Now, lordes God yow see!  
 The proudeste of thise notoures three  
 Answerde agayn What carl with sory grace!  
 Why artow al forwiapped save thy face?  
 Why lyvestow so longe in so greet age?

342 treete tell of 349 doom judgment 351 firste table (first five of the Ten Commandments) 353 seconde (according to the reckoning of the Catholic church) 354 ydel vain 355 rather earlier 360 plat flatly 363 ff. (The Pardoner is imitating the profane talk of gamblers) 364 Hayles (the Abbey of Hailes in Gloucestershire preserved blood thought to be Christ's) 365 I am shooting for seven you for a five and three 368 bicched bones cursed dice 376 belle (the lych belle carried by the sexton at a funeral) 378 knave serving boy

379 bet fast 385 to-nyght last night 386 Fordronke dead drunk 396 dame mother (?) 397 taverne innkeeper 399 henne distant 402 avysed forewarned 407 digne honored 408 al ones of one mind 409 til to the 421 (cf. 1 186) 426 grette greeted 427 see keep 429 with etc. a plague on you!

This olde man gan looke in his visage  
 And seyde thus For I ne kan nat fynde  
 A man, though that I walked into Ynde,  
 Neither in citee ne in no village 435  
 That wolde chaunge his youthe for myn age  
 And thefore moot I han myn age stille  
 As longe tyme as it is Goddes wille  
 Ne Deeth allas! ne wol nat han my lyf  
 Thus walke I lyk a resteles cutyf 440  
 And on the ground, which is my moodies gate  
 I knokke with my staf bothe erly and lute  
 And seye Leeve moode! leet me in!  
 Lo how I varysshe flessch, and blood and skyn!  
 Allas! whan shul my bones been at reste? 445  
 Mooder with yow wolde I chaunge my cheste  
 That in my chambre longe tyme hath be,  
 Ye for an heyre clowt to wrappe me!  
 But yet to me she wol nat do that grace,  
 For which ful pale and welked is my face 450

But sires to yow it is no curteisye  
 To speken to an old man vileynye  
 But he trespasse in word or elles in dede  
 In Hooly Writ ye may yourself wel rede  
 Agayns an oold man hoor upon his heed 455  
 Ye sholde aise wherefore I yeve yow reed  
 Ne dooth unto an oold man noon harm now  
 Namore than that ye wolde men did to yow  
 In age if that ye so longe abyde  
 And God be with yow wher ye go or ryde! 460  
 I moot go thider as I have to go

Nay, olde cheil by God thou shalt nat so  
 Seyde this oother hasardour anon,  
 Thou partest nat so lightly by Seint John!  
 Thou spak right now of thulke traytoun Deeth 465  
 That in this contree alle oure freendes sleeth  
 Have heer my trouthe, as thou art his espye!  
 Telle wher he is or thou shalt it abyde  
 By God and by the hooly sacrament!  
 For soothly thou art oon of his assent 470  
 To sleen us yonge folk thou false thief!

Now, sires, quod he if that vow be so leef  
 To fynde Deeth, turne up this croked wey  
 For in that grove I lafte hym by my fey  
 Under a tree, and there he wole abyde 475  
 Noght for youre boost he wole him no thyng hyde  
 Se ye that ook? Right there ye shal hym fynde  
 God save yow, that boghte agayn mankynde  
 And yow amende! Thus seyde this olde man  
 And everich of these riotoues ran 480  
 Til they cam to that tree, and ther they founde  
 Of floryns fyne of gold ycoyned rounde  
 Wel ny an eighte busschels, as hem thoughte  
 No lenger thanne after Deeth they soughte  
 But ech of hem so glad was of that sighte, 485

434 Ynde India 440 cutyf prisoner 448 heyre clowt haircloth (for burial) 450 welked wasted 453 But unless 460 go walk 467 My word on it you're his spy 468 abyde pry for 470 assent conspiracy 472 leef anxious 482 floryns (valued at 6s 8d)

For that the floryns been so faire and blyghte  
 That down they sette hem by this precious hood  
 The worste of hem he spak the firste word  
 Bretheren, quod he taak kepe what I seye,  
 My wit is greet though that I bourde and pleye 490  
 This tresor hath Fortune unto us yiven,  
 In mythe and joltee oure lyf to lyven,  
 And lightly as it cometh so wol we spende  
 Ey! Goddes precious dignitee! who wende 495  
 To day that we sholde han so fair a grace?  
 But myghte this gold be caied fro this place  
 Hoom to myn hous, or elles unto youre—  
 For wel ye woot that al this gold is oures—  
 Thanne were we in heigh felicitye 500  
 But tiewely, by daye it may nat bee,  
 Men wolde seyn that we were theves stronge,  
 And for oure owene tresor doon us honge  
 This tresor moste ycaied be by nyghte  
 As wisely and as slyly as it myghte 505  
 Wherefore I rede that cut among us alle  
 Be drawe and lat se wher the cut wol falle  
 And he that hath the cut with heite blithe  
 Shal renne to the towne, and that ful swithe  
 And brynge us biied and wyn ful prively 510  
 And two of us shul kepen subtilly  
 This tresor wel and if he wol nat tarye  
 Whan it is nyght we wol this tresor caie  
 By oon assent where is us thynketh best 514  
 That oon of hem the cut broghte in his fest  
 And bad hem diawe and looke where it wol falle,  
 And it fil on the yongeste of hem alle  
 And forth toward the toun he went anon  
 And also soone as that he was agon  
 That oon of hem spak thus unto that oother  
 Thou knowest wel thou art my sworn brother 520  
 Thy profit wol I telle thee anon  
 Thou woost wel that oure felawe is agon  
 And heere is gold, and that ful greet plentee,  
 That shal departed been among us thre  
 But nathelees, if I kan shape it so 525  
 That it departed were among us two  
 Hadde I nat doon a freendes torn to thee?  
 That oother answerde, I noot how that may be  
 He woot wel that the gold is with us tweye 529  
 What shal we doon? what shal we to hym seye?  
 Shal it be consel? seyde the firste shiewe  
 And I shal tellen in a wordes fewe  
 What we shal doon and bynge it wel aboute  
 I graunte, quod that oother, out of doute  
 That by my trouthe, I wol thee nat biwrewe 535  
 Now, quod the firste, thou woost wel we be  
 tweye,

And two of us shul strenger be than oon  
 Looke whan that he is set, that right anon  
 Ays as though thou woldest with hym pleye,

490 bourde jest 494 wende would have imagined 502 doon etc have us hanged 508 swithe quickly 515 looke see



And I shal ryve him thugh the sydes tweye  
 Whil that thou stogelest with hym as in game  
 And with thy daggere looke thou do the same  
 And thanne shal al this gold departed be  
 My deere freend bitwixe me and thee  
 Tnanne may we bothe oure lustes al fulfille  
 And pleye at dees right at oure owene wille  
 And thus acorded been thise shiewes tweye  
 To sleen the thridde, as ye han heid me seve  
 This yongeste which that wente to the toun  
 Ful ofte in heite he rolleth up and down  
 The beautee of thise floryns newe and blyghte  
 O Lord! quod he if so were that I myghte  
 Have al this tresor to myself allone  
 Ther is no man that lyveth under the trone  
 Of God that sholde lyve so muiye as I!  
 And atte laste the feend, oure enemy  
 Putte in his thought that he sholde poyson beye  
 With which he myghte sleen his felawes tweye  
 For why the feend foond hym in swich lyvynge  
 That he hadde leve hym to sorwe brynge  
 For this was outely his fulle entente  
 To sleen hem bothe and nevere to repente  
 And forth he gooth no lenger wolde he tyme  
 Into the toun unto a pothecarie  
 And preyed hym that he hym wolde selle  
 Som poyson that he myghte his rattes quelle  
 And eek ther was a polcat in his hawe  
 That as he seyde his capouns hadde yslawe  
 And fayn he wolde wreke hym if he myghte  
 On vermyn that destroyed hym by nyghte  
 The pothecarie answerde And thou shalt have  
 A thyng that also God my soule save  
 In al this world ther is no creature  
 That ete or dronke hath of this confiture  
 Noght but the montauce of a corn of whete  
 That he ne shal his lif anon forlete  
 Ye steive he shal and that in lasse while  
 Than thou wolt goon a paas nat but a mile,  
 This poyssoun is so strong and violent  
 This cursed man hath in his hond yhent  
 This poyssoun in a box, and sith he ran  
 Into the nexte stiete unto a man  
 And borwed hym large botels thre  
 And in the two his poyson pouwed he,  
 The thridde he kepte clene for his drynke  
 For al the nyght he shoop hym for to swynke  
 In carrynge of the gold out of that place  
 And whan this riotour with sory grace,  
 Hadde filled with wyn his grete botels thre  
 To his felawes agayn repaireth he  
 What nedeth it to seimone of it moore?  
 For right as they hadde cast his deeth bifoore

540 Right so they han hym slayn and that anon  
 And whan that this was doon thus spak that oon  
 Now lat us sitte and drynke and make us merye  
 And afterward we wol his body beye 596  
 And with that word it happed hym pai cas  
 To take the botel ther the poyson was,  
 And drank and yaf his felawe drynke also  
 For which anon they stoiven bothe two 600  
 But certes I suppose that Avycen  
 Wroot nevere in no canon ne in no fen  
 Mo wonder signes of empoisonyng  
 Thun hadde thise wrecches two, er hu endyng  
 Thus ended been thise homycides two 605  
 And eek the false empoisonere also  
 O cursed synne of alle cursednesse!  
 O traytours homyside, O wikkednesse!  
 O glotonve luxurie, and hasardrye!  
 Thou blasphemou of Crist with vileynye 610  
 And others grete, of usage and of pride!  
 Allas! mankynde how may it bitide  
 That to thy creatour which that thee wroghte  
 And with his precious herte blood thee boghte  
 Thou ait so fals and so unkynde allas? 615  
 Now, goode men God foryeve yow youre trespass!  
 And ware yow fro the synne of avaunce!  
 Myn hooly pardoun may yow alle waunce  
 So that ye offre nobles or steilynges  
 Or elles silver broches spoones rynges 620  
 Boweth youre heed under this hooly bulle!  
 Cometh up ye wyves offreth of youre wolle  
 Your names I entre heer in my rolle anon  
 Into the blisse of hevene shul ye gon  
 I yow assouille by myn heigh power 625  
 Yow that wol offie as clene and eek as cler  
 As ye were born (And lo sires thus I pieche)  
 And Jhesu Crist that is oure soules leche  
 So graunte yow his paidoun to receyve  
 For that is best I wol yow nat deceyve 630  
 But sies o word forgat I in my tale  
 I have relikes and pardoun in my male  
 As faue as any man in Engeland  
 Whiche were me yeven by the popes hond  
 If any of yow wole of devocioun 635  
 Offren and han myn absolucioun  
 Com forth anon and kneleth heere adoun  
 And mekely receyvethe my pardoun,  
 Or elles taketh pardoun as ye wende  
 Al newe and fressh at every tounes ende — 640  
 So that ye offren, alwey newe and newe  
 Nobles or pens whiche that be goode and tewe  
 It is an honour to everich that is heer  
 That ye mowe have a suffisant pardoneer

540 ryve stab 554 trone throne 559 For why because 566 quelle  
 kill 567 hawe yard 568 yslawe killed 569 wreke hym take ven  
 geance 570 destroyed were runing 572 also so may 574 confiture  
 concoction 575 montauce equivalent corn gain 578 a paas at a  
 wulk 588 with etc (cf 1 429)

597 par cas by chance 601 Avycen (Arabian physician author of  
 The Book of the Canon of Medicine) 602 fen chapter 603 signes  
 symptoms 611 usage habit 612 bitide happen 618 warice cure 618  
 nobles coins (6s 8d) sterilynges silver pennies 628 leche physician  
 (11 628 30 appear to be the benediction with which the sermon  
 concludes) 632 male (cf Pr 1 694)

I assoille yow in contree as ye ryde,  
 For aventures whiche that may bityde  
 Paraventure thei may falle oon or two  
 Doun of his hors and breke his nekke atwo  
 Looke which a seuetee is it to yow alle  
 That I am in youre felaweshipe yfalle  
 That may assoille yow bothe moore and lisse  
 Whan that the soule shal fro the body passe  
 I rede that oure Hoost heere shal bigynne  
 For he is moost enveloped in synne  
 Com forth, sire Hoost and offre first anon  
 And thou shalt kisse the rehkes everychon  
 Ye, for a grote! Unbokede anon thy purs!  
 Nay nay! quod he, thanne have I Cristes curs!  
 Lat be quod he it shal not be so theech!  
 Thou woldest make me kisse thy n olde breech  
 And sweie it were a relyk of a seint  
 Though it were with thy fundement depeint!  
 But by the croys which that Seint Eleyne fond  
 I wolde I hadde thy coillons in myn hond  
 In stede of rehkes or of sentuarie  
 Lat kutte hem of I wol thee help hem carie  
 They shul be shryned in an hogges toord!  
 This Pardoner answerde nat a word,  
 So wrooth he was no word ne wolde he seve  
 Now quod oure Hoost I wol no lenger pleye  
 With thee ne with noon oother angry man  
 But right anon the worthy Knyght bigan  
 Whan that he saugh that al the peple lough  
 Namore of this for it is right ynough!  
 Sire Pardoner be glad and myrie of cheere,  
 And ye sire Hoost that been to me so deere  
 I prey yow that ye kisse the Pardoner  
 And Pardoner I prey thee, drawe thee neer  
 And as we diden, lat us laughe and pleye  
 Anon they kiste and ryden forth hir weye

*Heere is ended the Pardoner's Tale*

654 enveloped wrapped up 658 thanne have I if I do may I have  
 659 so theech as I hope to prosper 660 breech drawers 662 de  
 pient befouled 663 Eleyne Helena 664 coillons testicles 665 sein  
 tuarie relinquiry 667 toord bit of dung

## Little Musgrave and Ladye Barnarde

(THE PERCY VERSION OF *Mattie Groves*)

As it fell out on a highe holye daye  
 As many bee in the yeare  
 When yong men and maides together do goe  
 Their masses and mattins to heare

Little Musgrave came to the church door,  
 The priest was at the mass,

645 But he had more mind of the fine women,  
 Than he had of our Ladye's grace

And some of them were clad in greene  
 And others were clad in pall  
 650 And then came in my lord Barnarde's wife  
 The fauest among them all

Shee cast an eye on little Musgrave  
 As bright as the summer sunne  
 655 O then bethought him little Musgrave  
 This ladye's heart I have wonne

Quoth shee, I have loved thee, little Musgrave  
 Fulle long and manye a daye  
 So have I loved you ladye faire  
 Yet woid I never durst saye

I have a bower at Bucklesford Bury,  
 Full dantilye bedight  
 665 If thoult wend thither my little Musgrave  
 Thoult lig in my armes all night

Quoth hee I thanke yee ladye faire  
 This kindness yee shew to mee  
 And whethei it be to my weale or woe  
 This night will I lig with thee

All this beheard a little foote page  
 By his ladye's coach as he ranne  
 675 Quoth he thoughte I am my ladye's page  
 Yet Ime my lord Barnarde's manne

My lord Barnarde shall knowe of this  
 Althoughe I lose a limbe  
 680 And ever wheras the bridges were broke,  
 He layd him downe to swimme

Asleep or awake thou lord Barnarde,  
 As thou art a manne of life,  
 Lo! this same night at Bucklesford Bury  
 Little Musgrave's in bed with thy wife

If it be trew, thou little foote page  
 This tale thou hast told to mee  
 Then all my lands in Bucklesford Bury  
 I freelye will give to thee

But and it be a lye thou little foote page,  
 This tale thou hast told to mee,  
 On the highest tree in Bucklesford Bury  
 All hanged shalt thou bee

Rise up rise up my menyne men all,  
 And saddle me my good steedes  
 This night must I to Bucklesford Bury,  
 God wott, I had never more neede

Then some they whistled, and some they sang  
 And some did loudlye saye  
 Whenever lord Barnarde's horne it blew e  
 Awaye, Musgrave awaye 55

Methinkes I heare the throstle cocke,  
 Methinkes I heare the jay  
 Methinkes I heare lord Barnarde's horne  
 I would I were awaye 60

Lye still lye still thou little Musgrave  
 And huggle mee from the cold  
 For it is but some shepardes boye  
 A whistling his sheepe to the fold

Is not thy hawke upon the pearche  
 Thy horse eating corne and haye?  
 And thou a gay ladye within thine armes  
 And wouldst thou be awaye? 65

By this lord Barnarde was come to the dore,  
 And lighted upon a stone  
 And he pulled out three silver keyes,  
 And opened the dores eche one 70

He lifted up the coverlett,  
 He lifted up the sheets,  
 How nowe how nowe thou little Musgrave,  
 Dost find my gaye ladye sweete? 75

I find her sweete quoth little Musgrave  
 The more is my grieve and paine  
 Ide gladly give three hundred poundes  
 That I were on yonder plaine 80

Arise arise thou little Musgrave,  
 And put thy cloathes nowe on  
 It shall never be said in my countree  
 That I killed a naked manne

I have two swordes in one scabbarde,  
 Full deare they cost my purse  
 And thou shalt have the best of them  
 And I will have the worse 85

The fist stroke that little Musgrave strucke  
 He hurt lord Barnarde sore,  
 The next stroke that lord Barnarde strucke  
 Little Musgrave never strucke more 90

With that bespake the ladye faire,  
 In bed whereas she laye  
 Although thou art dead, my little Musgrave,  
 Yet for thee I will praye! 95

And wishe well to thy soule will I,  
 So long as I have life,

So will I not do for thee Barnarde  
 Though I am thy wedded wife 100

He cut her pappes from off her breast,  
 Great pitye it was to see  
 The drops of this fair ladye's bloode  
 Run tickling downe her knee

Wo worth wo worth ye, my merrye men all  
 You never were boine for my goode  
 Why did you not offer to stay my hande  
 When you saw me wax so woode? 105

For I have slaine the fairest sir knighte  
 That ever rode on a steede  
 So have I done the fairest ladye,  
 That ever ware woman's weede 110

A grave, a grave lord Barnarde cryde  
 To putt these lovers in  
 But lay my ladye o the upper hande,  
 For shee comes o the better kn 115

## The "Revenge"

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

A BALLAD OF THE FLEET

### I

At Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay,  
 And a pinnace, like a fluttered bird came flying from  
 far away 80

Spanish ships of war at sea! we have sighted fifty-  
 three!

Then sware Lord Thomas Howard Foie God I  
 am no coward

But I cannot meet them here, for my ships are out  
 of gear 5

And the half my men are sick I must fly but follow  
 quick

We are six ships of the line can we fight with fifty  
 three? 10

### II

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville I know you are  
 no coward,

You fly them for a moment to fight with them agam  
 But I've ninety men and more that are lying sick  
 ashore 10

I should count myself the coward if I left them my  
 Lord Howard

To these Inquisition dogs and the devildoms of  
 Spain

## III

So Lord Howard passed away with five ships of war  
that day  
Till he melted like a cloud in the silent summer  
heaven  
But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick men from  
the land 15  
Very carefully and slow  
Men of Bideford in Devon  
And we laid them on the ballast down below,  
For we brought them all aboard  
And they blessed him in their pain, that they were  
not left to Spain, 20  
To the thumbscrew and the stake for the glory of  
the Lord

## IV

He had only a hundred seamen to work the ship and  
to fight  
And he sailed away from Flores till the Spaniard  
came in sight,  
With his huge sea castles heaving upon the weather  
bow  
Shall we fight or shall we fly? 25  
Good Sir Richard, tell us now,  
For to fight is but to die!  
There'll be little of us left by the time this sun be  
set  
And Sir Richard said again We be all good English  
men  
Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the children of the  
devil, 30  
For I never turned my back upon Don or devil yet

## V

Sir Richard spoke and he laughed, and we roared a  
hurrah and so  
The little *Revenge* ran on sheer into the heart of the  
foe,  
With her hundred fighters on deck, and her ninety  
sick below,  
For half of their fleet to the right and half to the left  
were seen 35  
And the little *Revenge* ran on through the long sea  
lane between

## VI

Thousands of their soldiers looked down from their  
decks and laughed  
Thousands of their seamen made mock at the mad  
little craft  
Running on and on till delayed  
By their mountain like *San Philip* that of fifteen  
hundred tons, 40  
And up shadowing high above us with her yawning  
tiers of guns,  
Took the breath from our sails, and we stayed

## VII

And while now the great *San Philip* hung above us  
like a cloud  
Whence the thunderbolt will fall  
Long and loud 45  
Four galleons drew away  
From the Spanish fleet that day  
And two upon the larboard and two upon the star  
board lay,  
And the battle thunder broke from them all

## VIII

But anon the great *San Philip*, she bethought herself  
and went 50  
Having that within her womb that had left her ill  
content,  
And the rest they came aboard us and they fought  
us hand to hand  
For a dozen times they came with their pikes and  
musketeers,  
And a dozen times we shook em off as a dog that  
shakes his ears  
When he leaps from the water to the land 55

## IX

And the sun went down and the stars came out far  
over the summer sea,  
But never a moment ceased the fight of the one and  
the fifty three  
Ship after ship, the whole night long, their high built  
galleons came  
Ship after ship the whole night long with her battle  
thunder and flame  
Ship after ship the whole night long, drew back with  
her dead and her shame 60  
For some were sunk and many were shattered and  
so could fight us no more—  
God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the  
world before?

## X

For he said Fight on! fight on!  
Though his vessel was all but a wreck  
And it chanced that, when half of the short summer  
night was gone 65  
With a grisly wound to be dressed he had left the  
deck  
But a bullet struck him that was dressing it suddenly  
dead  
And himself he was wounded again in the side and  
the head,  
And he said Fight on! fight on!

## XI

And the night went down and the sun smiled out  
far over the summer sea, 70

And the Spanish fleet with broken sides lay round us  
 all in a ring  
 But they dared not touch us again for they feared  
 that we still could sting  
 So they watched what the end would be  
 And we had not fought them in vain,  
 But in perilous plight were we 75  
 Seeing forty of our poor hundred were slain  
 And half of the rest of us maimed for life  
 In the crash of the cannonades and the desperate  
 strife  
 And the sick men down in the hold were most of  
 them stark and cold  
 And the pikes were all broken or bent and the  
 powder was all of it spent 80  
 And the masts and the rigging were lying over the  
 side  
 But Sir Richard cried in his English pride  
 We have fought such a fight for a day and a night  
 As may never be fought again!  
 We have won great glory my men! 85  
 And a day less or more  
 At sea or ashore  
 We die—does it matter when?  
 Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink her split her  
 in twain!  
 Fall into the hands of God not into the hands of  
 Spain! 90

## XII

And the gunner said Ay ay but the seamen made  
 reply  
 We have children we have wives  
 And the Lord hath spared our lives  
 We will make the Spaniard promise if we yield to  
 let us go  
 We shall live to fight again and to strike another  
 blow 95  
 And the lion there lay dying and they yielded to the  
 foe

## XIII

And the stately Spanish men to their flagship bore  
 him then  
 Where they laid him by the mast old Sir Richard  
 caught at last  
 And they praised him to his face with their courtly  
 foreign grace  
 But he rose upon their decks and he cried 100  
 I have fought for Queen and Faith like a valiant  
 man and true  
 I have only done my duty as a man is bound to do  
 With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Grenville die!  
 And he fell upon their decks and he died

## XIV

And they stared at the dead that had been so valiant  
 and true, 105

And had holden the power and glory of Spain so  
 cheap  
 That he dared her with one little ship and his English  
 few,  
 Was he devil or man? He was devil for aught they  
 knew  
 But they sank his body with honor down into the  
 deep  
 And they manned the *Revenge* with a swarthier alien  
 crew 110  
 And away she sailed with her loss and longed for  
 her own  
 When a wind from the lands they had ruined awoke  
 from sleep,  
 And the water began to heave and the weather to  
 moan  
 And or ever that evening ended a great gale blew  
 And a wave like the wave that is raised by an earth  
 quake grew 115  
 Till it smote on their hulls and their sails and their  
 masts and their flags  
 And the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot  
 shattered navy of Spain,  
 And the little *Revenge* herself went down by the  
 island crags  
 To be lost evermore in the main

## Frankie and Johnny

## ANONYMOUS

Frankie and Johnny were lovers  
 O my Gawd how they did love!  
 They swore to be true to each other,  
 As true as the stars above  
 He was her man but he done her wrong 5

Frankie and Johnny went walking  
 Johnny in a brand new suit  
 Frankie went walking with Johnny  
 Said O Gawd don't my Johnny look cute  
 He was her man but he done her wrong 10

Frankie went down to Memphis,  
 Went on the morning train  
 Paid a hundred dollars  
 Bought Johnny a watch and chain  
 He was her man but he done her wrong 15

Frankie went down to the hock-shop,  
 West for a bucket of beer,  
 Said O My Bartender  
 Has my loving Johnny been here?  
 He is my man but he's doing me wrong 20



And then Pope states and illustrates with technical virtuosity the aims and methods of this style in all its aspects: the emphasis on judgment and knowledge at the expense of inspiration and imagination; the appeal to Nature but a Nature rational, ordered, and trim; the dependence on the authority of the ancients and on the rules derived from them; and the recognition that poetry is an art that is a craft which can be learned only through practice of an obedience to its rules. The illustration of these points is done with sparkling brilliance.

A needless Alexandrine ends the song  
That like a wounded snake drags its slow length along

In contrast Keats puts forward the romantic view: for if Pope stands for ease, polish, sense, urbanity, wit, and effort concealed by art, Keats speaks for color, inspiration, variety, vivid imagery, and the free play of the imagination. One seeks ordered intelligence; the other, eternal beauty.

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on,  
Not to the sensual ear, but more endear'd  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone.

But Whitman is not concerned with either of these poetical ideals; rather, he calls for a poetry which can encompass the universe in all its great range and variety.

I have sung the body and the soul, war and peace, have I  
sung, and the songs of life and death.

He speaks not for the old but for the new.

I announce justice triumphant  
I announce the Union more and more compact, in  
dissoluble  
I announce the great individual fluid as Nature, chaste,  
affectionate, compassionate, fully arm'd.

He is the poet speaking for all men to all men in a language all can understand and be moved by; he is the democratic poet. Then Swinburne's *A Ballad of François Villon* expresses the popular notion of the poet as an individual different from and at odds with all society. Finally, in the poem by Wallace Stevens, poetry and music merge; the meaning of the poem is in its music.

## To the Earl of Roscommon on His Excellent Essay on Translated Verse

JOHN DRYDEN

Whether the fruitful Nile or Tyrian shore  
The seeds of arts and infant science bore  
Tis sure the noble plant translated first  
Advanced its head in Grecian gardens nursed

The Grecians added verse, then tuneful tongue 5  
Made nature first, and nature's God then song  
Nor stopped translation here for conquering Rome  
With Grecian spoils brought Grecian numbers home  
Enrich'd by those Athenian muses more 9  
Than all the vanquished world could yield before  
Till barbarous nations and more barbarous times  
Debased the majesty of verse to rhymes  
Those rude at first, a kind of hobbling prose  
That limped along and tinkles in the close  
But Italy reviving from the trance 15  
Of Vandal, Goth, and Monkish ignorance  
With pauses, cadence, and well vowel'd words  
And all the graces a good ear affords  
Made rhyme an art, and Dante's polished page  
Restored a silver, not a golden age 20  
Then Petrarch followed, and in him we see,  
What rhyme improved in all its height can be  
At best a pleasing sound, and fair barbarity  
The French pursued their steps, and Britain, last  
In manly sweetness all the rest surpassed 25  
The wit of Greece, the gravity of Rome  
Appear exalted in the British loom  
The Muses' empire is restored again  
In Charles his reign, and by Roscommon's pen  
Yet modestly he does his work survey 30  
And calls a finished Poem an Essay,  
For all the needful rules are scattered here  
Truth smoothly told, and pleasantly severe  
So well is art disguised for nature to appear  
Nor need these rules to give translation light 35  
His own example is a flame so bright  
That he who but arrives to copy well  
Unguided will advance, unknowing will excel  
Scarce his own Horace could such rules ordain  
Or his own Virgil sing a nobler strain 40

## from An Essay on Criticism

ALEXANDER POPE

### I

'Tis hard to say, if greater want of skill  
Appear in writing, or in judging ill  
But of the two, less dangerous is the offense  
To tire our patience, than mislead our sense 5  
Some few in that, but numbers err in this  
Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss  
A fool might once himself alone expose  
Now one in verse makes many more in prose  
'Tis with our judgments as our watches none 10  
Go just alike; yet each believes his own  
In poets as true genius is but rare  
True taste as seldom is the critic's share  
Both must alike from Heaven derive their light  
These born to judge, as well as those to write



Let such teach others who themselves excel 15  
 And censure freely who have written well  
 Authors are partial to their wit tis true  
 But are not critics to their judgment too?

Yet if we look more closely we shall find  
 Most have the seeds of judgment in their mind 20  
 Nature affords at least a glimmering light  
 The lines though touched but faintly are drawn  
 ight

But as the slightest sketch, if justly traced  
 Is by ill coloring but the more disgraced  
 So by false learning is good sense defaced, 25  
 Some are bewildered in the maze of schools  
 And some made coxcombs nature meant but fools  
 In search of wit these lose their common sense  
 And then turn critics in their own defense,  
 Or with a rivals or an eunuchs spite  
 Each burns alike who can or cannot write 30  
 All fools have still an itching to deride,  
 And fain would be upon the laughing side  
 If Maevius scribble in Apollo's sight  
 There are who judge still worse than he can write 35

Some have at first for wits, then poets past,  
 Turned critics next and proved plain fools at last  
 Some neither can for wits nor critics pass,  
 As heavy mules are neither horse nor ass  
 Those half learned w things numerous in our isle 40  
 As half formed insects on the banks of Nile  
 Unfinished things one knows not what to call  
 Their generation's so equivocal

To tell em would a hundred tongues require  
 Or one vain wits, that might a hundred tire 45

But you who seek to give and merit fame  
 And justly bear a critics noble name  
 Be sure yourself and your own reach to know,  
 How far your genius taste and learning go  
 Launch not beyond your depth but be discreet 50  
 And mark that point where sense and dulness meet

Nature to all things fixed the limits fit  
 And wisely curbed proud mans pretending wit  
 As on the land while here the ocean gains  
 In other parts it leaves wide sandy plains 55  
 Thus in the soul while memory prevails  
 The solid power of understanding fails,  
 Where beams of warm imagination play  
 The memory's soft figures melt away  
 One science only will one genius fit 60  
 So vast is art so narrow human wit  
 Not only bounded to peculiar arts,  
 But oft in those confined to single parts  
 Like kings we lose the conquests gained before  
 By vain ambition still to make them more 65  
 Each might his several province well command  
 Would all but stoop to what they understand

First follow Nature, and your judgment frame  
 By her just standard, which is still the same  
 Unerring Nature, still divinely bright, 70

One clear, unchanged and universal light,  
 Life force and beauty must to all impart  
 At once the source and end, and test of Art  
 Art from that fund each just supply provides  
 Works without show and without pomp presides 75  
 In some fair body thus the informing soul  
 With spirits feeds with vigor fills the whole,  
 Each motion guides and every nerve sustains,  
 Itself unseen but in the effects remains

Some, to whom Heaven in wit has been profuse 80  
 Want as much more to turn it to its use,  
 For wit and judgment often are at strife,  
 Though meant each others aid, like man and wife  
 Tis more to guide, than spur the Muses steed  
 Restrain his fury than provoke his speed 85  
 The winged courser, like a generous horse,  
 Shows most true mettle when you check his course

Those rules of old discovered not devised  
 Are Nature still, but Nature methodized  
 Nature like liberty is but restrained 90  
 By the same laws which first herself ordained

Hear how learned Greece her useful rules indites  
 When to repress and when indulge our flights  
 High on Parnassus top her sons she showed  
 And pointed out those arduous paths they trod 95  
 Held from afar, aloft the immortal prize  
 And urged the rest by equal steps to rise  
 Just precepts thus from great examples given  
 She drew from them what they derived from  
 Heaven

The generous critic fanned the poets fire 100  
 And taught the world with reason to admire  
 Then criticism the Muses handmaid proved  
 To dress her charms, and make her more beloved  
 But following wits from that intention strayed, 104  
 Who could not win the mistress wooed the maid  
 Against the poets their own arms they turned  
 Sure to hate most the men from whom they learned  
 So modern apothecaries taught the art,  
 By doctors bills to play the doctors part,  
 Bold in the practice of mistaken rules 110  
 Prescribe, apply and call their masters fools  
 Some on the leaves of ancient authors prey  
 Nor time nor moths ever spoiled so much as they  
 Some dryly plain without inventions aid  
 Write dull receipts how poems may be made 115  
 These leave the sense their learning to display  
 And those explain the meaning quite away

You then, whose judgment the right course would  
 steer

Know well each ancient's proper character,  
 His fable, subject, scope in every page 120  
 Religion, country genius of his age  
 Without all these at once before your eyes  
 Cavil you may but never criticize  
 Be Homers works your study and delight  
 Read them by day and meditate by night 125

Thence form your judgment thence your maxims  
bring

And trace the Muses upward to their spring  
Still with itself compared his text peruse  
And let your comment be the Mantuan Muse

When first young Maro in his boundless mind 130  
A work to outlast immortal Rome designed  
Perhaps he seemed above the critic's law  
And but from Nature's fountain scooped to draw  
But when to examine every part he came  
Nature and Homer were he found the same 135  
Convinced amazed he checks the bold design  
And rules as strict his labored work confine  
As if the Stagirite overlooked each line  
Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem  
To copy nature is to copy them 140

Some beauties yet no precepts can declare  
For there's a happiness as well as care  
Music resembles poetry in each  
Are nameless graces which no methods teach  
And which a master hand alone can reach 145  
If where the rules not far enough extend  
(Since rules were made but to promote their end)  
Some lucky license answer to the full  
The intent proposed that license is a rule  
Thus Pegasus a nearer way to take 150  
May boldly deviate from the common track  
From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part  
And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art  
Which without passing through the judgment gains  
The heart and all its end at once attains 155  
In prospects thus some objects please our eyes,  
Which out of nature's common order rise  
The shapeless rock or hanging precipice  
Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend  
And rise to faults true critics dare not mend 160  
But though the ancients thus their rules invade,  
(As kings dispense with laws themselves have made)  
Moderns beware! or if you must offend  
Against the precept ne'er transgress its end  
Let it be seldom, and compelled by need 165  
And have at least, their precedent to plead  
The critic else proceeds without remorse,  
Seizes your fame and puts his laws in force

I know there are, to whose presumptuous thoughts  
Those freer beauties, even in them seem faults 170  
Some figures monstrous and mis-shaped appear  
Considered singly or beheld too near  
Which but proportioned to their light or place  
Due distance reconciles to form and grace  
A prudent chief not always must display 175  
His powers in equal ranks and fair array,  
But with the occasion and the place comply,  
Conceal his force may seem sometimes to fly  
Those oft are stratagems which errors seem  
Nor is it Homer nods, but we that dream 180  
Still green with bays each ancient altar stands,

Above the reach of sacrilegious hands  
Secure from flames from envy's fiercer rage  
Destructive war and all involving age 184  
See from each clime the learned their incense bring!  
Hear in all tongues consenting paeans ring!  
In praise so just let every voice be joined  
And fill the general chorus of mankind  
Hail Bards triumphant! born in happier days  
Immortal heirs of universal praise! 190  
Whose honors with increase of ages grow  
As streams roll down enlarging as they flow  
Nations unborn your mighty names shall sound  
And worlds applaud that must not yet be found!  
Oh may some spark of your celestial fire 195  
The last the meanest of your sons inspire  
(That on weak wings from far pursues your flights  
Glow while he reads but trembles as he writes)  
To teach vain wits a science little known,  
To admire superior sense and doubt their own! 200

## II

Of all the causes which conspire to blind  
Man's erring judgment, and misguide the mind  
What the weak head with strongest bias rules  
Is pride the never failing vice of fools  
Whatever Nature has in worth denied 205  
She gives in large recruits of needful pride  
For as in bodies thus in souls we find  
What wants in blood and spirits swelled with  
wind  
Pride where wit fails steps in to our defense  
And fills up all the mighty void of sense 210  
If once right reason drives that cloud away,  
Truth breaks upon us with resistless day  
Trust not yourself, but your defects to know  
Make use of every friend—and every foe  
A little learning is a dangerous thing 215  
Dunk deep or taste not the Pierian spring  
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain  
And drinking largely sobers us again  
Fired at first sight with what the Muse imparts  
In fearless youth we tempt the heights of arts 220  
While from the bounded level of our mind  
Short views we take nor see the lengths behind  
But more advanced behold with strange surprise  
New distant scenes of endless science rise!  
So pleased at first the towering Alps we try 225  
Mount o'er the vales and seem to tread the sky  
The eternal snows appear already past  
And the first clouds and mountains seem the last,  
But those attained we tremble to survey  
The growing labors of the lengthened way 230  
The increasing prospect tires our wandering eyes,  
Hills peep o'er hills and Alps on Alps arise!

A perfect judge will read each work of wit  
With the same spirit that its author writ  
Survey the whole, nor seek slight faults to find 235

Where nature moves and rapture warms the mind  
 Nor lose for that malignant dull delight  
 The generous pleasure to be charmed with wit  
 But in such lays as neither ebb nor flow  
 Correctly cold and regularly low 240  
 That shunning faults one quiet tenor keep  
 We cannot blame indeed—but we may sleep  
 In wit, as nature what affects our hearts  
 Is not the exactness of peculiar parts  
 'Tis not a lip or eye, we beauty call 245  
 But the joint force and full result of all  
 Thus when we view some well proportioned dome  
 (The world's just wonder, and even thine O Rome!)  
 No single parts unequally surprise,  
 All comes united to the admiring eyes, 250  
 No monstrous height or breadth or length appear,  
 The Whole at once is bold and regular

Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see  
 Thinks what ne'er was nor is nor ever shall be  
 In every work regard the writer's end, 255  
 Since none can compass more than they intend,  
 And if the means be just the conduct true,  
 Applause in spite of trivial faults is due  
 As men of breeding sometimes men of wit  
 To avoid great errors must the less commit 260  
 Neglect the rules each verbal critic lays  
 For not to know some trifles is a praise  
 Most critics fond of some subservient art,  
 Still make the whole depend upon a part  
 They talk of principles but notions prize, 265  
 And all to one loved folly sacrifice

Some to concert alone their taste confine,  
 And glittering thoughts struck out at every line,  
 Pleased with a work where nothing's just or fit,  
 One glaring chaos and wild heap of wit 270  
 Poets, like painters thus unskilled to trace  
 The naked nature and the living grace,  
 With gold and jewels cover every part  
 And hide with ornaments their want of art  
 True wit is nature to advantage dressed, 275  
 What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed  
 Something whose truth convinced at sight we find  
 That gives us back the image of our mind  
 As shades more sweetly recommend the light,  
 So modest plainness sets off sprightly wit 280  
 For works may have more wit than does 'em good,  
 As bodies perish through excess of blood

Others for language all their care express  
 And value books, as women men, for dress  
 Their praise is still—The style is excellent, 285  
 The sense they humbly take upon content  
 Words are like leaves and where they most abound  
 Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found  
 False eloquence like the prismatic glass,  
 Its gaudy colors spreads on every place 290

The face of nature we no more survey,  
 All glares alike without distinction gay  
 But true expression like the unchanging sun  
 Clears and improves whatever it shines upon,  
 It gilds all objects but it alters none 295  
 Expression is the dress of thought, and still  
 Appears more decent as more suitable  
 A vile conceit in pompous words expressed  
 Is like a clown in regal purple dressed  
 For different styles with different subjects sort 300  
 As several garbs with country town, and court  
 Some by old words to fame have made pretense,  
 Ancients in phrase, mere moderns in their sense  
 Such labored nothings in so strange a style, 304  
 Amaze the unlearned and make the learned smile

In words as fashions the same rule will hold,  
 Alike fantastic if too new or old  
 Be not the first by whom the new are tried  
 Nor yet the last to lay the old aside

But most by numbers judge a poet's song 310  
 And smooth or rough with them is right or wrong  
 In the bright Muse, though thousand charms con-  
 spire,

Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire  
 Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear  
 Not mend their minds as some to church repair 315  
 Not for the doctrine, but the music there  
 These equal syllables alone require

Though oft the ear the open vowels tire,  
 While expletives their feeble aid do join,  
 And ten low words oft creep in one dull line 320

While they ring round the same unvaried chimes  
 With sure returns of still expected rhymes  
 Where'er you find the cooling western breeze 324  
 In the next line, it whispers through the trees

If crystal streams with pleasing murmurs creep  
 The reader's threatened (not in vain) with sleep  
 Then at the last and only couplet fraught  
 With some unmeaning thing they call a thought

A needless Alexandrine ends the song  
 That like a wounded snake drags its slow length  
 along 330

Leave such to tune their own dull rhymes and know  
 What's roundly smooth, or languishingly slow  
 And praise the easy vigor of a line  
 Where Denham's strength and Waller's sweetness  
 join

True ease in writing comes from art not chance 335  
 As those move easiest who have learned to dance  
 'Tis not enough no harshness gives offense

The sound must seem an echo to the sense  
 Soft is the strain when zephyr gently blows, 339  
 And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows  
 But when loud surges lash the sounding shore  
 The hoarse rough verse should like the torrent roar

When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,  
The line too labors and the words move slow  
Not so when swift Camilla scours the plain 345  
Flies o'er the unbending corn and skims along the  
main

Hear how Timotheus varied lays surprise  
And bid alternate passions fall and rise!  
While at each change the son of Lybian Jove  
Now burns with glory and then melts with love 350  
Now his fierce eyes with sparkling fury glow  
Now sighs steal out and tears begin to flow  
Persians and Greeks like turns of nature found  
And the world's victor stood subdued by sound!  
The power of music all our hearts allow 355  
And what Timotheus was, is Dryden now

## Ode on a Grecian Urn

JOHN KEATS

Thou still unavished bride of quietness  
Thou foster child of silence and slow time  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme  
What leaf fringed legend haunts about thy shape 5  
Of deities or mortals or of both  
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy? 10

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter therefore, ye soft pipes play on  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone  
Fair youth, beneath the trees thou canst not leave 15  
Thy song nor ever can those trees be bare,  
Bold Lover, never never canst thou kiss  
Though winning near the goal—yet do not grieve,  
She cannot fade though thou hast not thy bliss  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair! 20

Ah, happy happy boughs! that cannot shed  
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu  
And, happy melodist, unwearied  
For ever piping songs for ever new  
More happy love! more happy, happy love! 25  
For ever warm and still to be enjoyed  
For ever panting and for ever young  
All breathing human passion far above  
That leaves a heart high sorrowful and cloyed  
A burning forehead and a parching tongue 30

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
To what green altar, O mysterious priest  
Leadst thou that heifer lowing at the skies

And all her silken flanks with garlands dressed?  
What little town by river or sea shore 35  
Or mountain built with peaceful citadel  
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?  
And little town thy streets for evermore  
Will silent be and not a soul to tell  
Why thou art desolate can e'er return 40

O Attic shape! Fan attitude! with brede  
Of marble men and maidens overwrought  
With forest branches and the trodden weed  
Thou silent form, dost tease us out of thought  
As doth eternity Cold Pastoral! 45  
When old age shall this generation waste  
Thou shalt remain in midst of other woe  
Than ours a friend to man to whom thou sayst  
Beauty is truth truth beauty —that is all  
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know 50

## Symbolic Action in a Poem by Keats

Kenneth Burke

A work of art is as much the product of the spectator as it is of the artist: what the reader brings to a poem in the way of understanding will determine how much of it he understands. A poem is a very complex arrangement of symbols designed to elicit an equally complex set of responses: the more the reader is aware of the range and subtlety of the poetic stimuli, the deeper and richer are his responses; nor need the poet himself be necessarily conscious of all that he has actually put into his poem. Consequently the most rewarding reading of a poem will be in terms of a net of understanding so woven as to catch all the meanings inherent in it. The best reader is not one whose mind is a *tabula rasa* freed from all association and memory but on the contrary one who is as deeply versed in the technique and history of poetry as the poet himself: indeed if not more so. The main difficulty is to know what information bears properly on the poem: a simple love lyric does not require the exegesis of an epic; yet some lyrics which at first glance seem to be one dimensional and simple are revealed to possess depths of meaning which the unsophisticated reader too easily passes over. The child reads *Gulliver's Travels* as an exciting tale and it is right that he should do so: the mature reader sees it as one of the most bitter satires on mankind ever written and it is right that he should do so too: the scholar sees in it many allusions to the men and events of Swift's own day but the best reader is the one who reads on all three levels simultane-

ously and with equal pleasure Kenneth Burke is one of the most original and philosophical critics of poetry now at work he has created a method by which the complexity of a poem may be grasped with understanding and pleasure In this essay Burke's method reveals the layers of meaning of a poem which is ordinarily taken as a simple lyric

WE ARE here set to analyze the Ode on a Grecian Urn as a viaticum that leads by a series of transformations into the oracle Beauty is truth truth beauty We shall analyze the Ode dramatically in terms of symbolic action

To consider language as a means of *information* or *knowledge* is to consider it epistemologically semantically in terms of science To consider it as a mode of *action* is to consider it in terms of poetry For a poem is in act the symbolic act of the poet who made it—an act of such a nature that in surviving as a structure or object it enables us as readers to re enact it

Truth being the essential word of knowledge (science) and beauty being the essential word of art or poetry we might substitute accordingly The oracle would then assert, Poetry is science science poetry It would be particularly exhilarating to proclaim them one if there were a strong suspicion that they were at odds (as the assertion that Gods in his heaven all's right with the world is really a counter assertion to doubts about Gods existence and suspicions that much is wrong) It was the dialectical opposition between the aesthetic and the practical with poetry on one side and utility (business and applied science) on the other that was being ecstatically denied The *relief* in this denial was grounded in the romantic philosophy itself a philosophy which gave strong recognition to precisely the contrast between beauty and truth

Perhaps we might put it this way If the oracle were to have been uttered in the first stanza of the poem rather than the last its phrasing proper to that place would have been Beauty is *not* truth, truth *not* beauty The five stanzas of successive transformation were necessary for the romantic philosophy of a romantic poet to transcend itself (raising its romanticism to a new order or new dimension) An abolishing of romanticism through romanticism! (To transcend romanticism through romanticism is when all is over, to restore in one way what is removed in another)

But to the poem, step by step through the five stanzas

As a way in we begin with the sweeping periodic sentence that before the stanza is over has swiftly but imperceptibly been transmuted in quality

from the periodic to the breathless a cross between interrogation and exclamation

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness

Thou foster child of silence and slow time

Sylvan historian who canst thus express

A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape

Of deities or mortals or of both

In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?

What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Even the last quick outcries retain somewhat the quality of the periodic structure with which the stanza began The final line introduces the subject of pipes and timbrels which is developed and then surpassed in Stanza II

Heard melodies are sweet but those unheard

Are sweeter therefore ye soft pipes play on

Not to the sensual ear but more endear'd

Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone

Fair youth beneath the trees thou canst not leave

Thy song nor ever can those trees be bare

Bold Lover never never canst thou kiss

Though winning near the goal—yet do not grieve

She cannot fade though thou hast not thy bliss

Forever wilt thou love and she be fair!

If we had only the first stanza of this Ode and were speculating upon it from the standpoint of motivation we could detect these tentative indications of two motivational levels For the lines express a doubt whether the figures on the urn are deities or mortals—and the motives of gods are of a different order from the motives of men This bare hint of such a possibility emerges with something of certainty in the second stanza's development of the pipes and timbrels theme For we explicitly consider a contrast between body and mind (in the contrast between heard melodies addressed to the sensual ear and ditties of no tone addressed to the spirit)

Also of course the notion of inaudible sound brings us into the region of the mystic oxymoron (the term is rhetoric for the figure in which an epithet of a contrary significance is added to a word e.g. *cruel kindness laborious idleness*) And it clearly suggests a concern with the level of motives behind motives as with the paradox of the prime mover that is itself at rest being the unmoved ground of all motion and action Here the poet whose sounds are the richest in our language is meditating upon *absolute* sound the *essence* of sound which would be soundless as the prime mover is motionless or as the principle of sweetness would not be sweet

having transcended sweetness or as the sub atomic particles of the sun are each in their isolate purity said to be devoid of temperature

Contrast Keats's unheard melodies with those of Shelley

Music when soft voices die  
Vibrates in the memory—  
Odours when sweet violets sicken  
Live within the sense they quicken

Rose leaves when the rose is dead  
Are heaped for the beloved's bed  
And so thy thoughts when thou art gone  
Love itself shall slumber on

Here the futuristic Shelley is anticipating retrospection he is looking forward to looking back. The form of thought is naturalistic and temporalistic in terms of *past* and *future*. But the form of thought in Keats is mystical in terms of an *eternal present*. The Ode is striving to move beyond the region of becoming into the realm of *being* (This is another way of saying that we are here concerned with two levels of motivation).

In the last four lines of the second stanza the state of immediacy is conveyed by a development peculiarly Keatsian. I refer not simply to translation into terms of the erotic but rather to a quality of *suspension* in the erotic imagery defining an eternal prolongation of the state just prior to fulfilment—not exactly arrested ecstasy but rather an arrested pre-ecstasy.<sup>1</sup>

Suppose that we had but this one poem by Keats and knew nothing of its author or its period so that we could treat it only in itself as a series of internal transformations to be studied in their development from a certain point and without reference to any motives outside the Ode. Under such conditions, I think we should require no further observations to characterize (from the standpoint of symbolic action) the main argument in the second stanza. We might go on to make an infinity of observations about the details of the stanza but as regards major deployments we should deem it enough to note that the theme of pipes and timbrels is developed by the use of mystic oxymoron and then surpassed (or given a development atop the-development) by the stressing of erotic imagery (that had been ambiguously adumbrated in the references to maidens loth and mad pursuit of Stanza I). And we could note the quality of *incipience* in this imagery its state of arrest not at fulfilment, but at the point just prior to fulfilment.

<sup>1</sup> Mr G. Wilson Knight in *The Starlit Dome* refers to that recurring tendency in Keats to image a poised form, a stillness suggesting motion, what might be called a tiptoe effect.

Add, now, our knowledge of the poem's place as an enactment in a particular cultural scene and we likewise note in this second stanza a variant of the identification between death and sexual love that was so typical of 19th century romanticism and was to attain its musical monument in the Wagnerian *Liebestod*. On a purely dialectical basis to die in love would be to be born to love (the lovers dying as individual identities that they might be transformed into a common identity). Adding historical factors one can note the part that capitalist individualism plays in sharpening this consummation (since a property structure that heightens the sense of individual identity would thus make it more imperiously a death for the individual to take on the new identity made by a union of two). We can thus see why the love-death equation would be particularly representative of a romanticism that was the reflex of business.

Fortunately the relation between private property and the love-death equation is attested on unimpeachable authority concerning the effect of consumption and consummation in a mutual flame.

So between them love did shine  
That the turtle saw his right  
Flaming in the phoenix sight  
Either was the other's mine

Property was thus appall'd  
That the self was not the same  
Single nature's double name  
Neither two nor one was called

The addition of fire to the equation with its pun on sexual burning moves us from purely dialectical considerations into psychological ones. In the lines of Shakespeare fire is the third term, the ground term for the other two (the synthesis that ends the lovers' roles as thesis and antithesis). Less obviously the same movement from the purely dialectical to the psychological is implicit in any imagery of a *dying* or a *falling* in common, which when woven with sexual imagery signals a transcendent sexual consummation. The figure appears in a lover's compliment when Keats writes to Fanny Brawne thus:

I never knew before what such a love as you have made me feel was. I did not believe in it. My fancy was afraid of it lest it should burn me up. But if you will fully love me though there may be some fire 'twill not be more than we can bear when moistened and bedewed with pleasures.

Our primary concern is to follow the transformations of the poem itself. But to understand its full nature as a symbolic act we should use whatever knowledge is available. In the case of Keats, not only do we

know the place of this poem in his work and its time but also we have material to guide our speculations as regards correlations between poem and poet. I grant that such speculations interfere with the symmetry of criticism as a game (Criticism as a game is best to watch, I guess when one confines himself to the single unit and reports on its movements like a radio commentator broadcasting the blow by blow description of a prize fight). But linguistic analysis has opened up new possibilities in the correlating of producer and product—and these concerns have such important bearing upon matters of culture and conduct in general that no sheer conventions or ideals of criticism should be allowed to interfere with their development.

From what we know of Keats's illness, with the peculiar inclination to erotic imaginings that accompany its fever (as with the writings of D. H. Lawrence) we can glimpse a particular bodily motive expanding and intensifying the lyric state in Keats's case. Whatever the intense *activity* of his thoughts there was the material *pathos* of his physical condition. Whatever transformations of mind or body he experienced his illness was there as a kind of constitutional substrate whereby all aspects of the illness would be imbued with their derivation from a common ground (the phthisic fever thus being at one with the phthisic chill, for whatever the clear contrast between fever and chill, they are but modes of the same illness, the common underlying substance).

The correlation between the state of agitation in the poems and the physical condition of the poet is made quite clear in the poignant letters Keats wrote during his last illness. In 1819 he complains that he is scarcely content to write the best verses for the fever they leave behind. And he continues: "I want to compose without this fever. But a few months later he confesses: 'I am recommended not even to read poetry, much less write it. Or I must say that for 6 Months before I was taken ill I had not passed a tranquil day. Either that gloom overspread me or I was suffering under some passionate feeling, or if I turned to versify that exacerbated the poison of either sensation.' Keats was like a sick eagle looking at the sky—as he wrote of his mortality in a kindred poem, 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles'.

But though the poet's body was a *patient* the poet's mind was an *agent*. Thus, as a practitioner of poetry, he could *use* his fever, even perhaps encouraging, though not deliberately, esthetic habits that, in making for the perfection of his lines, would exact payment in the ravages of his body (somewhat as Hart Crane could write poetry only by modes of living that made for the cessation of his poetry and so led to his dissolution).

Speaking of agents, patients and action here we might pause to glance back over the centuries: thus in the Aristotelian grammar of motives, action has its reciprocal in passion, hence *passion* is the property of a *patient*. But by the Christian paradox (which made the martyr's action identical with his passion as the accounts of the martyrs were called both Acts and Passions) *patience* is the property of a moral *agent*. And this Christian view, as secularized in the philosophy of romanticism with its stress upon creativeness, leads us to the possibility of a bodily suffering redeemed by a poetic act.

In the third stanza, the central stanza of the Ode (hence properly the fulcrum of its swing) we see the two motives, the action and the passion, in the process of being separated. The possibility raised in the first stanza (which was dubious whether the level of motives was to be human or divine), and developed in the second stanza (which contrasts the sensual and the spirit) becomes definitive in Stanza III:

Ah happy happy boughs! that cannot shed  
Your leaves nor ever bid the Spring adieu  
And happy melodist, unwearied  
For ever piping songs for ever new  
More happy love! more happy happy love!  
For ever warm and still to be enjoyed  
For ever panting and for ever young  
All breathing human passion far above  
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed  
A burning forehead and a parching tongue

The poem as a whole makes permanent or fixes in a state of arrest a peculiar agitation. But within this fixity, by the nature of poetry as a progressive medium, there must be development. Hence the agitation that is maintained throughout (as a mood absolutized so that it fills the entire universe of discourse) will at the same time undergo internal transformations. In the third stanza these are manifested as a clear division into two distinct and contrasted realms. There is a transcendental fever which is felicitous, divinely above all breathing human passion. And this leaves the other level, the level of earthly fever, a burning forehead and a parching tongue. From the bodily fever which is a passion and malign, there has split off a spiritual activity, a wholly benign aspect of the total agitation.

Clearly, a movement has been finished. The poem must if it is well formed take a new direction growing out of and surpassing the curve that has by now been clearly established by the successive stages from "Is there the possibility of two motivational levels?" through "there are two motivational levels" to the active motivational level leaves the passive level.



Prophesying with the inestimable advantage that goes with having looked ahead what should we expect the new direction to be? First let us survey the situation. Originally before the two strands of the fever had been definitely drawn apart the bodily passion could serve as the scene or ground of the spiritual action. But at the end of the third stanza we abandon the level of bodily passion. The action is far above the passion it leaves the fever. What then would this transcendent act require to complete it?

It would require a scene of the same quality as itself. An act and a scene belong together. The nature of the one must be a fit with the nature of the other (I like to call this the scene act ratio or dramatic ratio). Hence the act having now transcended its bodily setting it will require as its new setting a transcendent scene. Hence prophesying *post eventum* we should ask that in Stanza IV the poem embody the transcendental act by endowing it with an appropriate scene.

The scene act ratio involves a law of dramatic consistency whereby the quality of the act shares the quality of the scene in which it is enacted (the synecdochic relation of container and thing contained). Its grandest variant was in supernatural cosmogonies wherein mankind took on the attributes of gods by acting in cosmic scenes that were themselves imbued with the presence of godhead.<sup>2</sup>

Or we may discern the logic of the scene act ratio behind the old controversy as to whether God willed the good because it is good or the good is good because God willed it. This strictly theological controversy had political implications. But our primary concern here is with the *dramatistic* aspects of this controversy. For you will note that the whole issue centers in the problem of the *grounds* of God's creative act.

Since, from the purely dramatic point of view, every act requires a scene in which it takes place we may note that one of the doctrines (that God willed the good because it is good) is more symmetrical than the other. For by it God's initial act of creation is itself given a ground or scene (the objective existence of goodness which was so real that God himself did not simply make it up but acted in conformity with its nature when willing it to be the law of his creation). In the scholastic formulas taken over from Aristotle, God was defined as pure act (though this pure act was in turn the ultimate ground or *scene* of human acting and

willing). And from the standpoint of purely dramatic symmetry it would be desirable to have some kind of scene even for God. This requirement is met we are suggesting in the doctrine that God willed the good *because* it is good. For this word *because* in assigning a reason for God's willing gives us in principle a kind of scene as we may discern in the pun of our word *ground* itself which indeterminate applies to either place or cause.

If even theology thus responded to the pressure for dramatic symmetry by endowing God as the transcendent act with a transcendent scene of like quality we should certainly expect to find analogous tactics in this Ode. For as we have noted that the romantic passion is the secular equivalent of the Christian passion so we may recall Coleridge's notion that poetic action itself is a dim analogue of Creation. Keats in his way confronting the same dramatistic requirement that the theologians confronted in theirs when he has arrived at his transcendent act at the end of Stanza III (that is when the benign fever has split away from the malign bodily counterpart as a divorcing of spiritual action from sensual passion) he is ready in the next stanza for the imagining of a scene that would correspond in quality to the quality of the action as so transformed. His fourth stanza will concretize or materialize, the act by dwelling upon its appropriate ground.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?

To what green altar, O mysterious priest  
Leadst thou that heifer lowing at the skies  
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?  
What little town by river or sea shore  
Or mountain built with peaceful citadel  
Is emptied of this folk this pious morn?  
And little town thy streets for evermore  
Will silent be and not a soul to tell  
Why thou art desolate can e'er return

It is a vision, as you prefer of death or of immortality. Immortality we might say, is the good word for death and must necessarily be conceived in terms of death (the necessity that Donne touches upon when he writes 'but thinke that I/Am by being dead, immortall'). This is why when discussing the second stanza I felt justified in speaking of the variations of the love-death equation, though the poem spoke not of love and *death* but of love *for ever*. We have a deathly deathless scene as the corresponding ground of our transcendent act. The Urn itself, as with the scene upon it is not merely an immortal act in our present mortal scene, it was originally an immortal act in a mortal scene quite different. The imagery, of sacrifice, piety, silence,

In an article by Leo Spitzer *Milieu and Ambiance: An Essay in Historical Semantics* (September and December 1942 numbers of *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*) one will find a wealth of material that can be read as illustrative of dramatic ratio.

desolation is that of communication with the immortal or the dead<sup>3</sup>

Incidentally we might note that the return to the use of rhetorical questions in the fourth stanza serves well on a purely technical level to keep our contact with the mood of the opening stanza a music that now but vibrates in the memory. Indeed one even gets the impression that the form of the rhetorical question had never been abandoned: that the poet's questings had been couched as questions throughout. This is tonal felicity at its best and something much like unheard tonal felicity. For the actual persistence of the rhetorical questions through these stanzas would have been wearisome, whereas their return now gives us an audible variation by making us feel that the exclamations in the second and third stanzas had been questions, as the questions in the first stanza had been exclamations.

But though a lyric greatly profits by so strong a sense of continuousness or perpetuity, I am trying to stress the fact that in the fourth stanza we *come upon* something. Indeed this fourth stanza is related to the three foregoing stanzas quite as the sestet is related to the octave in Keats's sonnet "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer":

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen  
Round many western islands have I been  
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold  
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne  
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene  
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold  
  
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent upon a peak in Darien

I am suggesting that just as the sestet in this sonnet *comes upon a scene* so it is with the fourth stanza of the Ode. In both likewise we end on the theme

<sup>3</sup> In imagery there is no negation or disjunction. Logically we can say *this or that*, *this not that*. In imagery we can but say *this and that*, *this with that*, *this that etc.* Thus imaginatively considered a commandment cannot be simply a proscription but is also latently a provocation (a state of affairs that figures in the kind of stylistic scrupulosity and/or curiosity to which Gide's heroes have been particularly sensitive as thou shalt not becomes imaginatively transformed into what would happen if . . .). In the light of what we have said about the deathliness of immortality and the relation between the erotic and the thought of a dying, perhaps we might be justified in reading the last line of the great "Bright Star" sonnet as naming states not simply alternative but also synonymous.

And so live ever—or else swoon to death

This use of the love-death equation is as startlingly paralleled in a letter to Fanny Brawne:

I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks: your loveliness and the hour of my death. O that I could take possession of them both in the same moment.

of silence, and is not the Ode's reference to the thing that not a soul can tell quite the same in quality as the sonnet's reference to a wild surmise?

Thus, with the Urn as viaticum (or rather with the poem as viaticum, and *in the name* of the Urn), having symbolically enacted a kind of act that transcends our mortality, we round out the process by coming to dwell upon the transcendental ground of this act. The dead world of ancient Greece, as immortalized on an Urn surviving from that period, is the vessel of this deathly deathless ambiguity. And we have gone dialectically from the human to the divine and thence to the ground of the divine (here tracing in poetic imagery the kind of dramatic course we have considered, on the purely conceptual plane in the theological speculations about the grounds for God's creative act). Necessarily there must be certain inadequacies in the conception of this ground precisely because of the fact that immortality can only be conceived in terms of death. Hence the reference to the desolate in a scene otherwise possessing the benignity of the eternal.

The imagery of pious sacrifice besides its fitness for such thoughts of departure as when the spiritual act splits from the sensual pathos suggests also a bond of communication between the levels (because of its immortal character in a mortal scene). And finally the poem in the name of the Urn or under the aegis of the Urn is such a bond. For we readers by re-enacting it in the reading use it as a viaticum to transport us into the quality of the scene which it depicts on its face (the scene containing as a fixity what the poem as an act extends into a process). The scene *on* the Urn is really the scene *behind* the Urn, the Urn is literally the ground of this scene but transcendently the scene is the ground of the Urn. The Urn contains the scene out of which it arose.

We turn now to the closing stanza:

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede  
Of marble men and maidens overwrought  
With forest branches and the trodden weed  
Thou silent form dost tease us out of thought  
As doth eternity. Cold Pastoral!  
When old age shall this generation waste  
Thou shalt remain in midst of other woe  
Than ours: a friend to man, to whom thou say'st  
Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all  
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know

In the third stanza we were at a moment of heat emphatically sharing an imagery of loves panting and for ever warm that was in the transcendental order, companionate to a burning forehead and a parching tongue in the order of the passions. But in the last stanza as signalized in the marmorean utterance, "Cold Pastoral!" we have gone from trans

cidental fever to transcendental chill. Perhaps, were we to complete our exegesis we should need reference to some physical step from phthisic fever to phthisic chill that we might detect here a final correlation between bodily passion and mental action. In any event we may note that the mental action having departed from the bodily passion the change from fever to chill is not a sufferance. For as only the *benign* aspects of the fever had been left after the split so it is a wholly benign chill on which the poem ends.<sup>4</sup>

I wonder whether anyone can read the reference to brede of marble men and maidens overwrought without thinking of breed for biede and excited for overwrought (Both expressions would thus merge notions of sexuality and craftsmanship the erotic and the poetic.) As for the designating of the Urn as an Attitude it fits in admirably with our stress upon symbolic action. For an attitude is an arrested or incipient *act*—not just an *object* or *thing*.

Yeats in *A Vision* speaks of the diagrams in Laws *Boehme*, where one lifts a paper to discover both the human entrails and the starry heavens. This equating of the deeply without and the deeply within (as also with Kant's famous remark) might well be remembered when we think of the sky that the watcher saw in Keats's sonnet. It is an internal sky attained through meditations induced by the reading of a book. And so the oracle, whereby truth and beauty are proclaimed as one would seem to derive from a profound inwardness.

Otherwise, without these introductory mysteries truth and beauty were at odds. For whereas beauty had its fulfilment in romantic poetry truth was coming to have its fulfilment in science, technological accuracy, accountancy, statistics, actuarial tables, and the like. Hence without benefit of the rites which one enacts in a sympathetic reading of the Ode (rites that remove the discussion to a different level) the enjoyment of beauty would involve an esthetic kind of awareness radically in conflict with the kind of awareness deriving from the practical truth. And as regards the tactics of the poem this conflict would seem to be solved by estheticizing the true rather than by verifying the beautiful.

Earlier in our essay we suggested reading poetry for beauty and science for truth with the oracle deriving its *liberating* quality from the fact that it is uttered at a time when the poem has taken us to a level where earthly contradictions do

not operate. But we might also in purely conceptual terms attain a level where poetry and science cease to be at odds namely by translating the two terms into the grammar that lies behind them. That is we could generalize the term poetry by widening it to the point where we could substitute for it the term act. And we could widen science to the point where we could substitute scene. Thus we have

beauty	equals	poetry	equals	act
truth	equals	science	equals	scene

We would equate beauty with act, because it is not merely a decorative thing but an assertion, an affirmative, a creation hence in the fullest sense an act. And we would equate truth or science with the scenic because science is a knowledge of *what is*—and *all that is* comprises the over all universal scene. Our corresponding transcendence then got by translation into purely grammatical terms would be Act is scene scene act. We have got to this point by a kind of purely conceptual transformation that would correspond I think to the transformations of imagery leading to the oracle in the Ode.

Act is scene scene act. Unfortunately, I must break the symmetry a little. For poetry as conceived in idealism (romanticism) could not quite be equated with *act* but rather with *attitude*. For idealistic philosophies with their stress upon the subjective place primary stress upon the *agent* (the individual the ego the will etc.) It was medieval scholasticism that placed primary stress upon the *act*. And in the Ode the Urn (which is the vessel or representative of poetry) is called an attitude which is not outright an act but an incipient or arrested act, a *state of mind*, the property of an *agent*. Keats in calling the Urn an attitude is *personifying* it. Or we might use the italicizing resources of dialectic by saying that for Keats beauty (poetry) was not so much the *act* of an agent as it was the act of an *agent*.

Perhaps we can reinforce this interpretation by examining kindred strategies in Yeats whose poetry similarly derives from idealistic romantic sources. Indeed as we have noted elsewhere<sup>5</sup> Yeats's vision of immortality in his Byzantium poems carries one step further the Keatsian identification with the Grecian Urn.

Once out of nature I shall never take  
My bodily form from any natural thing  
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make  
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling

Here certainly the poet envisions immortality as esthetically as Keats. For he will have immortality

<sup>4</sup> In a letter to Fanny Brawne Keats touches upon the fever/chill contrast in a passage that also touches upon the love/death equation though here the chill figures in an untransfigured state.

I fear that I am too prudent for a dying kind of Lover. Yet there is a great difference between going off in warm blood like Romeo and making one's exit like a frog in a frost.

<sup>5</sup> On Motivation in Yeats (*The Southern Review* Winter 1942).

is a golden bird a fabricated thing a work of Grecian goldsmiths Here we go in the same direction as the overwrought Urn but further along in that direction

The ending of Yeats's poem "Among School Children" helps us to make still clearer the idealistic stress upon agent

Labour is blossoming or dancing where  
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul  
Nor beauty torn out of its own despair  
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil  
O chestnut tree great rooted blossomer  
Are you the leaf the blossom or the bole?  
O body swayed to music O brightening glance  
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

Here the chestnut tree (as personified agent) is the ground of unity or continuity for all its scenic manifestations, and with the agent (dancer) is merged the act (dance). True we seem to have here a commingling of act scene and agent all three. Yet it is the *agent* that is foremost among the equals. Both Yeats and Keats of course were much more dramatic in their thinking than romantic poets generally who usually center their efforts upon the translation of *scene* into terms of *agent* (as the materialistic science that was the dialectical counterpart of romantic idealism preferred conversely to translate *agent* into terms of *scene* or in other words to treat consciousness in terms of matter the mental in terms of the physical people in terms of environment).

To review briefly: The poem begins with an ambiguous fever which in the course of the further development is separated out splitting into a bodily fever and a spiritual counterpart. The bodily passion is the malign aspect of the fever, the mental action its benign aspect. In the course of the development, the malign passion is transcended and the benign active partner, the intellectual exhilaration takes over. At the beginning where the two aspects were ambiguously one, the bodily passion would be the scene of the mental action (the objective symptoms of the body would be paralleled by the subjective symptoms of the mind the bodily state thus being the other or ground of the mental state). But as the two become separated out the mental action transcends the bodily passion. It becomes an act in its own right making discoveries and assertions not grounded in the bodily passion. And this quality of action in transcending the merely physical symptoms of the fever, would thus require a different ground or scene, one more suited in quality to the quality of the transcendent act.

The transcendent act is concretized or materialized, in the vision of the immortal scene, the

reference in Stanza IV to the original scene of the Urn the heavenly scene of a dead or immortal Greece (the scene in which the Urn was originally erected and which is also fixed on its face). To indicate the internality of this vision we referred to a passage in Yeats relating the depths of the sky without to the depths of the mind within and we showed a similar pattern in Keats's account of the vision that followed his reading of Chapman's Homer. We suggested that the poet is here coming upon a new internal sky through identification with the Urn as act, the same sky that he came upon through identification with the enactments of Chapman's translation.

This transcendent scene is the level at which the earthly laws of contradiction no longer prevail. Hence in the terms of this scene he can proclaim the unity of truth and beauty (of science and art) a proclamation which he needs to make precisely because here was the basic split responsible for the romantic agitation (in both poetic and philosophic idealism). That is it was gratifying to have the oracle proclaim the unity of poetry and science because the values of technology and business were causing them to be at odds. And from the perspective of a higher level (the perspective of a dead or immortal scene transcending the world of temporal contradictions) the split could be proclaimed once more a unity.

At this point at this stage of exaltation the fever has been replaced by chill. But the bodily passion has completely dropped out of account. All is now mental action. Hence the chill (as in the ecstatic exclamation "Cold Pastoral") is proclaimed only in its benign aspect.

We may contrast this discussion with explanations such as a materialist of the Kierkegaard school might offer. I refer to accounts of motivation that might treat disease as cause and poem as effect. In such accounts the disease would not be "passive" but wholly active and what we have called the mental action would be wholly passive hardly more than an epiphenomenon a mere symptom of the disease quite as are the fever and the chill themselves. Such accounts would give us no conception of the essential matter here, the intense linguistic activity.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the main features of Burke's method of criticism?
- 2 How does it compare with and differ from the other methods of criticism presented here?
- 3 Has Burke's method helped you in your reading of Keats's Ode?
- 4 Are you able to apply this method to the analysis of the other poems reprinted here?
- 5 What are the defects and limitations of the method?

6 Has Burke read more into the poem than can legitimately be found there?  
 7 To which of the other critics reprinted here is Burke allied in method and intent?

## So Long!

WALT WHITMAN

To conclude, I announce what comes after me

I remember I said before my leaves sprang at all  
 I would raise my voice jocund and strong with reference to consummations

When America does what was promised  
 When through these States walk a hundred millions of superb persons 5  
 When the rest part away for superb persons and contribute to them  
 When breeds of the most perfect mothers denote America  
 Then to me and mine our due fruition

I have pressed through in my own right 9  
 I have sung the body and the soul, war and peace have I sung, and the songs of life and death  
 And the songs of birth, and shown that there are many births

I have offered my style to every one I have journeyed with confident step  
 While my pleasure is yet at the full I whisper *So long!*  
 And take the young woman's hand and the young man's hand for the last time

I announce natural persons to arise 15  
 I announce justice triumphant  
 I announce uncompromising liberty and equality  
 I announce the justification of candor and the justification of pride

I announce that the identity of these States is a single identity only,  
 I announce the Union more and more compact in dissoluble 20  
 I announce splendors and majesties to make all the previous politics of the earth insignificant  
 I announce adhesiveness I say it shall be limitless, unloosen'd  
 I say you shall yet find the friend you were looking for

I announce a man or woman coming perhaps you are the one (*So long!*) 24  
 I announce the great individual, fluid is Nature chaste, affectionate compassionate, fully un-

I announce a life that shall be copious vehement spiritual bold  
 I announce an end that shall lightly and joyfully meet its translation

I announce myriads of youths beautiful, gigantic sweet blooded  
 I announce a race of splendid and savage old men

O thicker and faster—(*So long!*) 30  
 O crowding too close upon me  
 I foresee too much, it means more than I thought  
 It appears to me I am dying

Hasten throat and sound your last  
 Salute me—salute the days once more Peal the old cry once more 35

Screaming electric the atmosphere using  
 At random glancing, each as I notice absorbing  
 Swiftly on but a little while alighting  
 Curious envelop'd messages delivering 39  
 Sparkles hot seed ethereal down in the dust dropping  
 Myself unknowing my commission obeying to question it never daring  
 To ages and ages yet the growth of the seed leaving  
 To troops out of the war arising they the task I have set promulging  
 To women certain whispers of myself bequeathing their affection me more clearly explaining  
 To young men my problems offering—no dallier I—I the muscle of their brains crying 45  
 So I pass a little time vocal visible contrary  
 Afterward a melodious echo passionately bent for (death making me really undying)  
 The best of me then when no longer visible for toward that I have been incessantly preparing  
 What is there more that I lag and pause and crouch extended with unshut mouth?  
 Is there a single final farewell? 50

My songs cease I abandon them  
 From behind the screen where I hid I advance personally solely to you

Camerado, this is no book,  
 Who touches this touches a man  
 (Is it night? are we here together alone?) 55  
 It is I you hold and who holds you  
 I spring from the pages into your arms—decease calls me forth

O how your fingers drowse me,  
 Your breath falls around me like dew your pulse lulls the tympani of my eus,  
 I feel immersed from head to foot 60  
 Delicious enough

Enough O deed impromptu and secret  
 Enough O gliding present—enough O summ'd up  
 past

Dear friend whoever you are take this kiss  
 I give it especially to you do not forget me 65  
 I feel like one who has done work for the day to re-  
 tire awhile  
 I receive now again of my many translations from  
 my avatars ascending while others doubtless  
 await me  
 An unknown sphere more real than I dream'd more  
 direct darts awakening rays about me, *So long!*  
 Remember my words I may again return  
 I love you I depart from materials 70  
 I am as one disembodied triumphant dead

## A Ballad of François Villon

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

PRINCE OF ALL BALLAD MAKERS

Bird of the bitter bright grey golden morn  
 Scarce risen upon the dusk of dolorous years,  
 First of us all and sweetest singer born  
 Whose far shrill note the world of new men hears  
 Cleave the cold shuddering shade as twilight  
 clears, 5  
 When song new born put off the old world's attire  
 And felt its tune on her changed lips expire  
 Wit foremost on the roll of them that came  
 Fresh girt for service of the latter lyre  
 Villon our sad bad glad mad brother's name! 10

Alas the joy the sorrow and the scorn  
 That clothed thy life with hopes and sins and fears,  
 And gave thee stones for bread and tares for corn  
 And plume plucked gaol birds for thy starveling  
 peers  
 Till death clapt close their flight with shameful  
 shears 15  
 Till shifts came short and loves were hard to hire  
 When lilt of song nor twitch of twangling wire  
 Could buy thee bread or kisses when light fame  
 Spun like a ball and haled through brake and  
 briar  
 Villon our sad bad glad mad brother's name! 20

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn!  
 Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick  
 tears!  
 Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn  
 That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers  
 Like joy bells crossed with death bells in our ears!  
 What far delight has cooled the fierce desire 26

That like some ravenous bird was strong to tire  
 On that frail flesh and soul consumed with flame  
 But left more sweet than roses to respire  
 Villon our sad bad glad mad brother's name? 30

ENVOI

Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire  
 A harlot was thy nurse a God thy sire,  
 Shame soiled thy song and song assoiled thy  
 shame  
 But from thy feet now death has washed the mire  
 Love reads our first at head of all our quire 35  
 Villon our sad bad glad mad brother's name

## Peter Quince at the Clavier

WALLACE STEVENS

I

Just as my fingers on these keys  
 Make music so the self same sounds  
 On my spirit make a music too

Music is feeling then not sound  
 And thus it is that what I feel 5  
 Here in this room desuing you,

Thinking of you blue shadowed silk  
 Is music It is like the strain  
 Waked in the elders by Susanna

Of a green evening clear and warm 10  
 She bathed in her still garden while  
 The red eyed elders watching felt

The basses of their being throb  
 In witching chords and their thin blood  
 Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna 15

II

In the green water clear and warm,  
 Susanna lay  
 She searched  
 The touch of springs  
 And found 20  
 Concealed imaginings  
 She sighed  
 For so much melody

Upon the bank she stood  
 In the cool  
 Of spent emotions 25

She felt, among the leaves,  
 The dew  
 Of old devotions

She walked upon the grass  
Still quavering  
The winds were like her maids  
On timid feet,  
Fetching her woven scarves,  
Yet wavering

A breath upon her hand  
Muted the night  
She turned—  
A cymbal clashed  
And roaring horns

### III

Soon, with a noise like tambourines  
Came her attendant Byzantines

They wondered why Susanna cried  
Against the elders by her side

And as they whispered the refrain  
Was like a willow swept by rain

Anon their lamps uplifted flame  
Revealed Susanna and her shame

And then the simpering Byzantines  
Fled with a noise like tambourines

## IV

Beauty is momentary in the mind—  
The fitful tracing of a portal  
But in the flesh it is immortal

The body dies, the body's beauty lives  
So evenings die in their green going  
A wave, interminably flowing

So gardens die, their meek breath scenting  
The cowl of Winter done repenting  
So maidens die to the auroral  
Celebration of a maiden's choral

Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings  
Of those white elders, but, escaping,  
Left only Death's ironic scraping  
Now in its immortality it plays  
On the clear viol of her memory,  
And makes a constant sacrament of praise



*The Child Is Father of the Man*  
*The Theme of Childhood*

The theme of childhood is intimately associated with the romantic school of poetry. In their endeavors to open new fields of experience to the Expression of poetry the romantic poets saw that the rich and eventful days of childhood had been unexplored. At least two reasons can be suggested for their recognition of the importance of childhood: one was the strong strain of neo Platonism in their thinking, and the other was their desire to discover a romantic equivalent for the neoclassical Noble Savage to whom might be attributed all the freshness, innocence, and goodness to which a sophisticated and corrupt world could not attain, but to which a moral appeal might be made. The result was the extensive use of a new theme, one which has not been exhausted to this day, for if the influence of Plato's ideas on the subject no longer holds sway, the influence of Freud has more than taken its place. If we cannot imagine Sir Joshua Reynolds going to an exhibition of children's painting, we cannot doubt that Klee did so and learned there to see with the direct and clear eye of the child. The child then provides a new angle of vision, a vision which though fundamentally anti-intellectual in character, yet throws into sharp relief the deficiencies of the adult, contaminated mind. Our first poem is a neoclassical treatment of the theme of childhood, which utilizes it only as a springboard for conventional reflections on the theme of death.

Alas! Regardless of their doom  
The little victims play  
No sense have they of ills to come  
Nor care beyond today  
Yet see how all around em wait  
The ministers of human fate

But as soon as we turn to Wordsworth we perceive a complete change in attitude the child has become the father of the man and in the organ sonorities of the Ode on Intimations of Immortality we hear

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting  
The Soul that rises with us our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting  
And cometh from afar  
Not in entire forgetfulness  
And not in utter nakedness  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God who is our home  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

Thus through the child man and Nature are made one  
To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears

For this reason does Wordsworth refer to his youth as the fur seed-time of my soul when Nature herself was his tutor But that clouds of glory may sometimes trail and droop in the dust we discover in Mr Fearnings No Credit



# Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College

THOMAS GRAY

Ye distant spires ye antique towers  
That crown the watery glade  
Where grateful Science still adores  
Her Henry's holy shade,  
And ye that from the stately brow  
Of Windsor's heights th' expanse below  
Of grove, of lawn, of mead survey  
Whose turf whose shade whose flowers among  
Wanders the hoary Thames along  
His silver-winding way

Ah happy hills! ah pleasing shade!  
Ah fields beloved in vain!  
Where once my careless childhood stray'd  
A stranger yet to pain!  
I feel the gales that from ye blow  
A momentary bliss bestow  
As waving fresh their gladsome wing  
My weary soul they seem to soothe  
And, redolent of joy and youth,  
To breathe a second spring

Say Father Thames for thou hast seen  
Full many a sprightly race  
Disporting on thy margent green  
The paths of pleasure trace,  
Who foremost now delight to cleave  
With pliant arm, thy glassy wave?  
The captive linnet which enthrall?  
What idle progeny succeed  
To chase the rolling circle's speed  
Or urge the flying ball?

While some on earnest business bent  
Their murmuring labours ply  
Gainst graver hours that bring constraint  
To sweeten liberty  
Some bold adventurers disdain  
The limits of their little reign  
And unknown regions dare descry  
Still as they run they look behind  
They hear a voice in every wind,  
And snatch a fearful joy

Gay hope is thine by fancy fed,  
Less pleasing when possess'd,  
The tear forgot as soon as shed,  
The sunshine of the breast  
Thine buxom health of rosy hue,  
Wild wit invention ever new  
And lively cheer, of vigour born,

The thoughtless day the easy night,  
The spirits pure the slumbers light  
That fly th' approach of morn

Alas! regardless of their doom  
The little victims play  
No sense have they of ills to come  
Nor care beyond to day  
Yet see how all around em wait  
The ministers of human fate  
And black Misfortune's baleful train!  
Ah show them where in ambush stand  
To seize their prey, the murderous band!  
Ah tell them they are men!

These shall the fury Passions tear  
The vultures of the mind,  
Disdainful Anger pallid Fear  
And Shame that skulks behind,  
Or pining Love shall waste their youth  
Or Jealousy with rankling tooth  
That only gnaws the secret heart  
And Envy wan and faded Care  
Grim visaged comfortless Despair,  
And Sorrow's piercing dart

Ambition this shall tempt to rise  
Then whirl the wretch from high  
To bitter Scorn a sacrifice  
And ginning Infamy  
The stings of Falsehood those shall try  
And hard Unkindness alter'd eye  
That mocks the tear it forced to flow  
And keen Remorse with blood defiled,  
And moody Madness laughing wild  
Amid severest woe

Lo in the vale of years beneath  
A griesly troop are seen,  
The painful family of Death  
More hideous than their queen  
This racks the joints this fires the veins  
That every labouring sinew strains  
Those in the deeper vitals rage  
Lo! Poverty to fill the band,  
That numbs the soul with icy hand  
And slow consuming Age

To each his sufferings all are men,  
Condemn'd alike to groan  
The tender for another's pain,  
Th' unfeeling for his own  
Yet ah! why should they know their fate  
Since sorrow never comes too late  
And happiness too swiftly flies?  
Thought would destroy their paradise  
No more —where ignorance is bliss  
Tis folly to be wise

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At length the Man perceives it die away  
And fade into the light of common day

## VI

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own,  
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind  
And even with something of a mother's mind  
And no unworthy aim  
The homely nurse doth all she can  
To make her Foster child her inmate Man,  
Forget the glories he hath known  
And that imperial palace whence he came

## VII

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses  
A six years' darling of a pigmy size!  
See where mid-work of his own hand he lies  
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses  
With light upon him from his father's eyes!  
See at his feet some little plan or chart  
Some fragment from his dream of human life  
Shaped by himself with newly learned art  
A wedding or a festival  
A mourning or a funeral  
And this hath now his heart  
And unto this he frames his song  
Then will he fit his tongue  
To dialogues of business, love or strife,  
But it will not be long  
Ere this be thrown aside  
And with new joy and pride  
The little Actor cons another part,  
Filling from time to time his humorous stage  
With all the Persons down to palsied Age,  
That Life brings with her in her equipage  
As if his whole vocation  
Were endless imitation

## VIII

Thou whose exterior semblance doth belie  
Thy Soul's immensity,  
Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep  
Thy heritage thou Eye among the blind,  
That deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep  
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—  
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!  
On whom those truths do rest  
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,  
In darkness lost the darkness of the grave,  
Thou over whom thy Immortality  
Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave  
A Presence which is not to be put by,  
Thou little Child yet glorious in the might  
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height  
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke  
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,  
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?

75 Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight  
And custom lie upon thee with a weight  
Heavy as frost and deep almost as life!

## IX

80 O joy! that in our embers  
Is something that doth live  
That nature yet remembers  
What was so fugitive!  
The thought of our past years in me doth breed  
Perpetual benediction not indeed  
For that which is most worthy to be blest,  
135 Delight and liberty the simple creed  
Of Childhood whether busy or at rest  
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast —  
Not for these I raise  
The song of thanks and praise  
140 But for those obstinate questionings  
Of sense and outward things  
Fallings from us vanishings  
Blank misgivings of a Creature  
Moving about in worlds not realized  
145 High instincts before which our mortal nature  
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised  
But for those first affections  
Those shadowy recollections  
Which be they what they may  
150 Are yet the fountain-light of all our day  
Are yet a master light of all our seeing  
Uphold us cherish and have power to make  
Our noisy years seem moments in the being  
Of the Eternal Silence truths that wake  
155 To perish never  
Which neither listlessness nor mad endeavor  
Nor man nor boy,  
Nor all that is at enmity with joy  
Can utterly abolish or destroy!  
160 Hence in a season of calm weather  
Though inland far we be  
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea  
Which brought us hither  
Can in a moment travel thither  
165 And see the children sport upon the shore  
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore

## X

115 Then sing ye Birds, sing sing a joyous song!  
And let the young Lambs bound  
As to the tabor's sound!  
120 We in thought will join your throng  
Ye that pipe and ye that play  
Ye that through your hearts to day  
Feel the gladness of the May!  
174 What though the radiance which was once so bright  
Be now forever taken from my sight  
Though nothing can bring back the hour

Of splendor in the grass of glory in the flower,  
 We will grieve not, rather find  
 Strength in what remains behind 180  
 In the primal sympathy  
 Which having been must ever be  
 In the soothing thoughts that spring  
 Out of human suffering  
 In the faith that looks through death 185  
 In years that bring the philosophic mind

## XI

And O ye Fountains Meadows Hills and Groves,  
 Forebode not any severing of our loves!  
 Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might,  
 I only have relinquished one delight 190  
 To live beneath your more habitual sway  
 I love the Brooks which down their channels fret  
 Even more than when I tripped lightly as they  
 The innocent brightness of a new-born Day  
 Is lovely yet 195  
 The Clouds that gather round the setting sun  
 Do take a sober coloring from an eye  
 That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality  
 Another race hath been and other palms are won  
 Thanks to the human heart by which we live 200  
 Thanks to its tenderness its joys and fears  
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears

# The Immortality Ode

*Lionel Trilling*

Professor of English at Columbia University where he was also educated Lionel Trilling is recognized for his abilities as a critic both at home and abroad. Not only has he written two major critical studies *Matthew Arnold* and *E. M. Forster* he has edited the works of Arnold and the letters of Keats he has done a number of often reprinted short stories and has written an important novel *The Middle of the Journey*. The study of Wordsworth was first read before the English Institute in 1941 and is one of his collected papers assembled in *The Liberal Imagination*. The job of criticism Professor Trilling has said

would seem to be then to recall liberalism to its first essential imagination of variousness and possibility which implies the awareness of complexity and difficulty. To the carrying out of the job of criticizing the liberal imagination literature has a unique relevance not merely because so much of modern literature has explicitly directed itself upon politics but more importantly because literature is the human activity that takes the

fullest and most precise account of variousness possibility complexity and difficulty

In addition to his interest in the relations of literature to politics Professor Trilling is equally concerned with the relations of literature to psychology in particular two of his essays on this latter relationship *Freud and Literature* and *Art and Neurosis* have been widely influential in acclimating the methods of psychoanalytic analysis to the study of literature. These two interests have been combined to produce the examination of *The Immortality Ode*

## I

CRITICISM we know must always be concerned with the poem itself. But a poem does not always exist only in itself; sometimes it has a very lively existence in its false or partial appearances. These simulacra of the actual poem must be taken into account by criticism, and sometimes in its effort to come at the poem as it really is criticism does well to allow the simulacra to dictate at least its opening moves. In speaking about Wordsworth's Ode *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, I should like to begin by considering an interpretation of the poem which is commonly made.<sup>1</sup> According to this interpretation—I choose for its brevity Dean Sperry's statement of a view which is held by many other admirable critics—the Ode is Wordsworth's conscious farewell to his art, a dirge sung over his departing powers.

How did this interpretation—erroneous as I believe—come into being? The Ode may indeed be quoted to substantiate it, but I do not think it has been drawn directly from the poem itself. To be sure the Ode is not wholly perspicuous. Wordsworth himself seems to have thought it difficult for in the Fenwick notes he speaks of the need for competence and attention of the reader. The difficulty does not lie in the diction, which is simple or even in the syntax, which is sometimes obscure but rather in certain contradictory statements which the poem makes, and in the ambiguity of some of its crucial words. Yet the erroneous interpretation I am dealing with does not arise from any intrinsic difficulty of the poem itself but rather from certain extraneous and unexpressed assumptions which some of its readers make about the nature of the mind.

Nowadays it is not difficult for us to understand that such tacit assumptions about the mental processes are likely to lie hidden beneath what we say about poetry. Usually despite our general awareness of their existence it requires great effort to bring these assumptions explicitly into consciousness. But in speaking of Wordsworth one of the commonest of our unexpressed ideas comes so close to the surface of our

<sup>1</sup> The text of the poem is given just preceding this essay.

thought that it needs only to be grasped and named. I refer to the belief that poetry is made by means of a particular poetic faculty—a faculty which may be isolated and defined.

It is this belief, based wholly upon assumption, which underlies all the speculations of the critics who attempt to provide us with explanations of Wordsworth's poetic decline by attributing it to one or another of the events of his life. In effect any such explanation is a way of *defining* Wordsworth's poetic faculty—what the biographical critics are telling us is that Wordsworth wrote great poetry by means of a faculty which depended upon his relations with Annette Vallon or by means of a faculty which operated only so long as he admired the French Revolution, or by means of a faculty which flourished by virtue of a particular pitch of youthful sense perception or by virtue of a certain attitude toward Jeffrey's criticism or by virtue of a certain relation with Coleridge.

Now no one can reasonably object to the idea of mental determination in general, and I certainly do not intend to make out that poetry is an unconditioned activity. Still this particular notion of mental determination which implies that Wordsworth's genius failed when it was deprived of some single emotional circumstance is so much too simple and so much too mechanical that I think we must inevitably reject it. Certainly what we know of poetry does not allow us to refer the making of it to any single faculty. Nothing less than the whole mind—the whole man, will suffice for its origin. And such was Wordsworth's own view of the matter.

There is another unsubstantiated assumption at work in the common biographical interpretation of the Ode. This is the belief that a natural and inevitable warfare exists between the poetic faculty and the faculty by which we conceive or comprehend general ideas. Wordsworth himself did not believe in this antagonism—indeed, he held an almost contrary view—but Coleridge thought that philosophy had encroached upon and destroyed his own powers and the critics who speculate on Wordsworth's artistic fate seem to prefer Coleridge's psychology to Wordsworth's own. Observing in the Ode a contrast drawn between something called the visionary gleam and something called the philosophic mind, they leap to the conclusion that the Ode is Wordsworth's conscious farewell to his art—a dirge sung over departing powers.

I am so far from agreeing with this conclusion that I believe the Ode is not only not a dirge sung over departing powers but actually a dedication to new powers. Wordsworth did not, to be sure, realize his hopes for these new powers, but that is quite another matter.

## II

As with many poems it is hard to understand any part of the Ode until we first understand the whole of it. I will therefore say at once what I think the poem is chiefly about. It is a poem about growing—some say it is a poem about growing old—but I believe it is about growing up. It is incidentally a poem about optics and then inevitably, about epistemology—it is concerned with ways of seeing and then with ways of knowing. Ultimately it is concerned with ways of acting for, as usual with Wordsworth, knowledge implies liberty and power. In only a limited sense is the Ode a poem about immortality.

Both formally and in the history of its composition the poem is divided into two main parts. The first part consisting of four stanzas states an optical phenomenon and asks a question about it. The second part consisting of seven stanzas answers that question and is itself divided into two parts of which the first is despairing, the second hopeful. Some time separates the composition of the question from that of the answer, the evidence most recently adduced by Professor de Selincourt seems to indicate that the interval was two years.

The question which the first part asks is this:

Whither is fled the visionary gleam?  
Where is it now the glory and the dream?

All the first part leads to this question—but although it moves in only one direction it takes its way through more than one mood. There are at least three moods before the climax of the question is reached.

The first stanza makes a relatively simple statement. There was a time when all common things seemed clothed in celestial light when they had the glory and the freshness of a dream. In a poem ostensibly about immortality we ought perhaps to pause over the word *celestial*, but the present elaborate title was not given to the poem until much later and conceivably at the time of the writing of the first part the idea of immortality was not in Wordsworth's mind at all. Celestial light probably means only something different from ordinary, earthly, scientific light—it is a light of the mind shining even in darkness—by night or day—and it is perhaps similar to the light which is praised in the invocation to the third book of *Paradise Lost*.

The second stanza goes on to develop this first mood, speaking of the ordinary physical kind of vision and suggesting further the meaning of *celestial*. We must remark that in this stanza Wordsworth is so far from observing a diminution of his physical senses that he explicitly affirms their strength. He is at pains to tell us how vividly he sees the rain, how the rose, the moon, the stars, the water and

the sunshine I emphasize this because some of those who find the Ode a dirge over the poetic power maintain that the poetic power failed with the failure of Wordsworth's senses. It is true that Wordsworth, who lived to be eighty, was said in middle life to look much older than his years. Still thirty-two his age at the time of writing the first part of the Ode, is an extravagantly early age for a dramatic failure of the senses. We might observe here, as others have observed elsewhere, that Wordsworth never did have the special and perhaps modern sensibility of his sister or of Coleridge, who were so aware of exquisite particularities. His finest passages are moral, emotional, subjective; whatever visual intensity they have comes from his response to the object, not from his close observation of it.

And in the second stanza Wordsworth not only confirms his senses but he also confirms his ability to perceive beauty. He tells us how he responds to the loveliness of the rose and of the stars reflected in the water. He can deal in the way of Fancy with the delight of the moon when there are no competing stars in the sky. He can see in Nature certain moral propensities. He speaks of the sunshine as a glorious birth. But here he pauses to draw distinctions from that fascinating word, glory, despite his perception of the sunshine as a glorious birth, he knows that there hath past away a glory from the earth.

Now with the third stanza the poem begins to complicate itself. It is *while* Wordsworth is aware of the optical change in himself, the loss of the glory, that there comes to him a thought of grief. I emphasize the word *while* to suggest that we must understand that for some time he had been conscious of the optical change *without* feeling grief. The grief then would seem to be coincidental with but not necessarily caused by the change. And the grief is not of long duration, for we learn that

A timely utterance gave that thought relief  
And I again am strong

It would be not only interesting but also useful to know what that timely utterance was, and I shall hazard a guess, but first I should like to follow the development of the Ode a little further, pausing only to remark that the reference to the timely utterance seems to imply that although the grief is not of long duration, still we are not dealing with the internal experiences of a moment, or of a morning's walk, but of a time sufficient to allow for development and change of mood, that is, the dramatic time of the poem is not exactly equivalent to the emotional time.

Stanza iv goes on to tell us that the poet, after gaining relief from the timely utterance, whatever that was, felt himself quite in harmony with the joy of Nature in spring. The tone of this stanza is ec-

static and in a way that some readers find strained and unpleasant and even of doubtful sincerity. Twice there is a halting repetition of words to express a kind of painful intensity of response: I feel—I feel it all, and I hear I hear with joy I hear! Wordsworth sees, hears, feels—and with that joy, which both he and Coleridge felt to be so necessary to the poet. But despite the response, despite the joy, the ecstasy changes to sadness in a wonderful modulation which quite justifies the antecedent shrillness of affirmation.

—But there's a Tree of many one  
A single Field which I have looked upon  
Both of them speak of something that is gone  
The Pansy at my feet  
Doth the same tale repeat

And what they utter is the terrible question

Whither is fled the visionary gleam?  
Where is it now the glory and the dream?

### III

Now, the interpretation which makes the Ode a dirge over departing powers and a conscious farewell to art takes it for granted that the visionary gleam, the glory and the dream, are Wordsworth's names for the power by which he made poetry. This interpretation gives to the Ode a place in Wordsworth's life exactly analogous to the place that *Dejection* has in Coleridge's life. It is well known how intimately the two poems are connected, the circumstances of their composition makes them symbiotic. Coleridge in his poem most certainly does say that his poetic powers are gone or going; he is very explicit and the language he uses is very close to Wordsworth's own. He tells us that upon theanimate cold world there must issue from the soul a light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud, and that this glory is Joy, which he himself no longer possesses. But Coleridge's poem, although it responds to the first part of Wordsworth's, is not a recapitulation of it. On the contrary, Coleridge is precisely contrasting his situation with Wordsworth's. As Professor de Selincourt says in his comments on the first version of *Dejection*, this contrast was the root idea of Coleridge's ode.<sup>2</sup> In April of 1802 Wordsworth was a month away from his marriage to Mary Hutchinson, on the point of establishing his life in a felicity and order which became his genius, while Coleridge was at the nadir of despair over his own unhappy marriage and his hopeless love for Sara, the sister of Wordsworth's fiancée. And the difference between the situations of the two friends stands in Coleridge's

mind for the difference in the states of health of their respective poetic powers

Coleridge explicitly ascribes the decay of his poetic power to his unhappiness which worked him harm in two ways—by forcing him to escape from the life of emotion to find refuge in intellectual abstraction and by destroying the Joy which, issuing as a light a glory, a fair luminous cloud so irradiated the world as to make it a fit object of the shaping power of imagination. But Wordsworth tells us something quite different about himself. He tells us that he has strength, that he has Joy, but still he has not the glory. In short we have no reason to assume that when he asks the question at the end of the fourth stanza he means: Where has my creative power gone? Wordsworth tells us how he made poetry: he says he made it out of the experience of his senses as worked upon by his contemplative intellect; but he nowhere tells us that he made poetry out of visionary gleams out of glories, or out of dreams.

To be sure he writes very often about gleams. The word gleam is a favorite one with him and a glance at the Lane Cooper concordance will confirm our impression that Wordsworth whenever he has a moment of insight or happiness, talks about it in the language of light. His great poems are about moments of enlightenment in which the metaphorical and the literal meaning of the word are at one—he uses glory in the abstract modern sense but always with an awareness of the old concrete iconographic sense of a visible numbus.<sup>3</sup> But this momentary and special light is the subject matter of his poetry, not the power of making it. The moments are moments of understanding but Wordsworth does not say that they make writing poetry any easier. Indeed in lines 59-131 of the first book of *The Prelude* he expressly says that the moments of clarity are by no means always matched by poetic creativity.

As for dreams and poetry there is some doubt about the meaning that Wordsworth gave to the word dream used as a metaphor. In *Expostulation and Reply* he seems to say that dreaming—dream my time away—is a good thing, but he is ironically using his interlocutor's depreciatory word and he really does not mean dream at all. In the *Peele Castle* verses which have so close a connection with the *Immortality Ode*, he speaks of the poet's dream and makes it synonymous with gleam, with the light that never was, on sea or land, and with the consecration. But the beauty of the famous lines often makes us forget to connect them with what follows, for Wordsworth says that gleam, light, con-

secration, and dream would have made an illusion or, in the 1807 version a delusion. Professor Beatty reminds us that in the 1820 version Wordsworth destroyed the beauty of the lines in order to make his intention quite clear. He wrote

and add a gleam  
Of lustre known to neither sea nor land  
But borrowed from the youthful Poet's Dream

That is according to the terms of Wordsworth's conception of the three ages of man, the youthful Poet was as he had a right to be, in the service of Fancy and therefore saw the sea as calm. But Wordsworth himself can now no longer see in the way of Fancy, he has, he says, submitted to a new control. This seems to be at once a loss and a gain. The loss: A power is gone which nothing can restore. The gain:

A deep distress hath humanized my Soul, this is gain because happiness without humanization is to be pitied for it is surely blind to be housed in a dream is to be at distance from the kind (i.e. mankind). In the *Letter to Mathetes* he speaks of the Fancy as dreaming and the Fancy is, we know, a lower form of intellect in Wordsworth's hierarchy and peculiar to youth.

But although, as we see Wordsworth uses the word dream to mean illusion, we must remember that he thought illusions might be very useful. They often led him to proper attitudes and allowed him to deal successfully with reality. In *The Prelude* he tells us how his reading of fiction made him able to look at the disfigured face of the drowned man without too much horror: how a kind of superstitious conviction of his own powers was useful to him; how indeed many of the most critical moments of his boyhood education were moments of significant illusion; and in *The Excursion* he is quite explicit about the salutary effects of superstition. But he was interested in dreams not for their own sake but for the sake of reality. Dreams may perhaps be associated with poetry but reality certainly is and reality for Wordsworth comes fullest with Imagination: the faculty of maturity. The loss of the dream may be painful but it does not necessarily mean the end of poetry.

#### IV

And now for a moment I should like to turn back to the timely utterance because I think an understanding of it will help get rid of the idea that Wordsworth was saying farewell to poetry. Professor Garrod believes that this utterance was: My heart leaps up when I behold, which was written the day before the *Ode* was begun. Certainly this poem is most intimately related to the *Ode*—its theme, the legacy left by the child to the man, is a dominant theme of the *Ode*, and Wordsworth used

<sup>3</sup> We recall that in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* William James speaks of the hallucinatory or pseudo-hallucinatory luminous phenomena *photisms* to use the term of the psychologists: the floods of light and glory which characterize so many moments of revelation. James mentions one person who experiencing the light was uncertain of its externality.



its last lines as the Ode's epigraph. But I should like to suggest that the utterance was something else. In line 42 Wordsworth says "Oh evil day! if I were sullen" and the word *sullen* leaps out at us as a striking and carefully chosen word. Now there is one poem in which Wordsworth says that he was sullen, it is *Resolution and Independence*.

We know that Wordsworth was working on the first part of the Ode on the 27th of March, the day after the composition of the rainbow poem. On the 17th of June he added a little to the Ode, but what he added we do not know. Between these two dates Wordsworth and Dorothy had paid their visit to Coleridge, who was sojourning at Keswick during this visit. Coleridge on April 4 had written *Dejection*, an Ode, very probably after he had read what was already in existence of the *Immortality Ode*. Coleridge's mental state was very bad—still not so bad as to keep him from writing a great poem—and the Wordsworths were much distressed. A month later, on May 3, Wordsworth began to compose *The Leech Gatherer*, later known as *Resolution and Independence*. It is this poem that is, I think, the timely utterance.<sup>4</sup>

*Resolution and Independence* is a poem about the fate of poets. It is also a poem about sullenness, in the sense that the people in the Fifth Circle are said by Dante to be sullen. Sullen were we in the sweet air that is gladdened by the sun, carrying lazy smoke within our hearts, now lie sullen here in the black mire! This hymn they gurgle in their throats for they cannot speak it in full words.<sup>5</sup>—that is they cannot now have relief by timely utterances as they would not on earth. And sullenness I take to be the creation of difficulties where none exist, the working of a self-injuring imagination such as a modern mental physician would be quick to recognize as a neurotic symptom. Wordsworth's poem is about a sudden unmotivated anxiety after a mood of great exaltation. He speaks of this reversal of feeling as something experienced by himself before and known to all. In this mood he is the prey of fears and fancies of dim sadness and blind thoughts. These feelings have reference to two imagined catastrophes. One of them—natural enough in a man under the stress of approaching marriage for Wordsworth was to be married in October—is economic destitution. He reproaches himself for his past indifference to the means of getting a living and thinks

<sup>4</sup> I follow Professor Garrod in assuming that the utterance was a poem, but of course it may have been a letter or a spoken word. And if indeed the utterance does refer to *Resolution and Independence*, it may not refer to the poem itself—as Jacques Barzun has suggested to me—it may refer to what the Leech-gatherer in the poem says to the poet for certainly it is what the old man utters that gives the poet relief.

<sup>5</sup> The Carlyle-Wicksteed translation. Dante's word is *tristi*. In *Resolution and Independence* Wordsworth speaks of dim sadness. I mention Dante's sinners simply to elucidate the emotion that Wordsworth speaks of, not to suggest an influence.

of what may follow from this carefree life: solitude, pain of heart, distress and poverty. His black thoughts are led to the fate of poets in their misery, dead among them Chatterton and Burns. The second specific fear is of mental distress.

We Poets in our youth begin in gladness  
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness

Coleridge we must suppose was in his thoughts after the depressing Keswick meeting, but he is of course thinking chiefly of himself. It will be remembered how the poem ends: how with some difficulty of utterance the poet brings himself to speak with an incredibly old leech-gatherer, and taking heart from the man's resolution and independence becomes again strong.

This great poem is not to be given a crucial meaning in Wordsworth's life. It makes use of a mood to which everyone, certainly every creative person is now and again a victim. It seems to me more likely that it, rather than the rainbow poem, is the timely utterance of which the Ode speaks because in it and not in the rainbow poem a sullen feeling occurs and is relieved. But whether or not it is actually the timely utterance, it is an autobiographical and deeply felt poem written at the time the Ode was being written and seeming to have an emotional connection with the first part of the Ode. (The meeting with the old man had taken place two years earlier and it is of some significance that it should have come to mind as the subject of a poem at just this time.) It is a very precise and hard-headed account of a mood of great fear and it deals in a very explicit way with the dangers that beset the poetic life. But although Wordsworth urges himself on to think of all the bad things that can possibly happen to a poet and mentions solitude, pain of heart, distress and poverty, cold, pain and labor, all fleshly ills, and then even madness, he never says that a poet stands in danger of losing his talent. It seems reasonable to suppose that if Wordsworth were actually saying farewell to his talent in the Ode, there would be some hint of an endangered or vanishing talent in *Resolution and Independence*. But there is none at the end of the poem. Wordsworth is resolute in poetry.

Must we not then look with considerable skepticism at such interpretations of the Ode and suppose without question that the gleam, the glory and the dream constitute the power of making poetry?—especially when we remember that at a time still three years distant Wordsworth in *The Prelude* will speak of himself as becoming a *creative soul* (book XII, line 207, the italics are Wordsworth's own) despite the fact that as he says (book XII, line 281), he sees by glimpses now

## v

The second half of the Ode is divided into two large movements each of which gives an answer to the question with which the first part ends. The two answers seem to contradict each other. The first issues in despair, the second in hope; the first uses a language strikingly supernatural, the second is entirely naturalistic. The two parts even differ in the statement of fact: for the first says that the gleam is gone, whereas the second says that it is not gone but only transmuted. It is necessary to understand this contradiction, but it is not necessary to resolve it: for from the circuit between its two poles comes much of the power of the poem.

The first of the two answers (stanzas v-viii) tells us where the visionary gleam has gone by telling us where it came from. It is a remnant of a pre-existence in which we enjoyed a way of seeing and knowing now almost wholly gone from us. We come into the world not with minds that are merely *tabulae rasae*, but with a kind of attendant light, the vestige of an existence otherwise obliterated from our memories. In infancy and childhood the recollection is relatively strong, but it fades as we move forward into earthly life. Maturity, with its habits and its cares and its increase of distance from our celestial origin, wears away the light of recollection. Nothing could be more poignantly sad than the conclusion of this part with the heavy sonority of its last line as Wordsworth addresses the child in whom the glory still lives:

Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight  
And custom lie upon thee with a weight  
Heavy as frost and deep almost as life!

Between this movement of despair and the following movement of hope there is no clear connection save that of contradiction. But between the question itself and the movement of hope there is an explicit verbal link, for the question is: 'Whither has fled the visionary gleam?' and the movement of hope answers that nature yet remembers/What was so fugitive.

The second movement of the second part of the Ode tells us again what has happened to the visionary gleam: it has not wholly fled, for it is remembered. This possession of childhood has been passed on as a legacy to the child's heir, the adult man, for the mind, as the rainbow epigraph also says, is one and continuous, and what was so intense a light in childhood becomes the fountain light of all our day and a master light of all our seeing, that is, of our adult day and our mature seeing. The child's recollection of his heavenly home exists in the recollection of the adult.

But what exactly is this fountain light, this master-light? I am sure that when we understand what it is

we shall see that the glory that Wordsworth means is very different from Coleridge's glory, which is Joy. Wordsworth says that what he holds in memory as the guiding heritage of childhood is exactly not the Joy of childhood. It is not delight, not liberty, not even hope—not for these, he says, I raise/The song of thanks and praise. For what then does he raise the song? For this particular experience of childhood:

those obstinate questionings  
Of sense and outward things  
Fallings from us, vanishings  
Blank misgivings of a Creature  
Moving about in worlds not realised

He mentions other reasons for gratitude, but here for the moment I should like to halt the enumeration.

We are told then that light and glory consist at least in part of questionings, fallings from us, vanishings, and blank misgivings in a world not yet *made real* for surely Wordsworth uses the word 'realised' in its most literal sense. In his note on the poem he has this to say of the experience he refers to:

I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from but inherent in my own material nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. At this time I was afraid of such processes.

He remarks that the experience is not peculiar to himself, which is of course true, and he says that it was connected in his thoughts with a potency of spirit which made him believe that he could never die.

The precise and naturalistic way in which Wordsworth talks of this experience of his childhood must cast doubt on Professor Garrod's statement that Wordsworth believed quite literally in the notion of pre-existence, with which the vanishings experience is connected. Wordsworth is very careful to delimit the extent of his belief; he says that it is too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith as an evidence of immortality. He says that he is using the idea to illuminate another idea—using it as he says, for my purpose and as a poet. It has as much validity for him as any popular religious idea might have, that is to say, a kind of suggestive validity. We may regard pre-existence as being for Wordsworth a very serious conceit, vested with relative belief, intended to give a high value to the natural experience of the vanishings.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> In his *Studies in the Poetry of Henry Vaughan*, a Cambridge University dissertation, Andrew Chiappe makes a similar judgment of the quality and degree of belief in the idea of pre-existence in the poetry of Vaughan and Traherne.

The naturalistic tone of Wordsworth's note suggests that we shall be doing no violence to the experience of the vanishings if we consider it scientifically. In a well known essay "Stages in the Development of the Sense of Reality" the distinguished psychoanalyst Ferenczi speaks of the child's reluctance to distinguish between himself and the world and of the slow growth of objectivity which differentiates the self from external things. And Freud himself dealing with the oceanic sensation of being at one with the universe which a literary friend had supposed to be the source of all religious emotions conjectures that it is a vestige of the infant's state of feeling before he has learned to distinguish between the stimuli of his own sensations and those of the world outside. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* he writes

Originally the ego includes everything later it detaches from itself the outside world. The ego feeling we are aware of now is thus only a shrunken vestige of a more extensive feeling—a feeling which embraced the universe and expressed an inseparable connection of the ego with the external world. If we may suppose that this primary ego feeling has been preserved in the minds of many people—to a greater or lesser extent—it would co-exist like a sort of counterpart with the narrower and more sharply outlined ego feeling of maturity and the ideal of limitless extension and oneness with the universe—the same feeling as that described by my friend as oceanic.

This has its clear relation to Wordsworth's worlds not realised. Wordsworth like Freud, was preoccupied by the idea of reality and again like Freud he knew that the child's way of apprehension was but a stage which in the course of nature would give way to another. If we understand that Wordsworth is speaking of a period common to the development of everyone we are helped to see that we cannot identify the vision of that period with his peculiar poetic power.

But in addition to the experience of the vanishings there is another experience for which Wordsworth is grateful to his childhood and which I believe goes with the vanishings to make up the master light, the fountain light. I am not referring to the

High instincts before which our mortal Nature  
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised

but rather to what Wordsworth calls "those first affections"

I am inclined to think that with this phrase Wordsworth refers to a later stage in the child's development which like the earlier stage in which the external world is included within the ego, leaves ves-

tiges in the developing mind. This is the period described in a well known passage in Book II of *The Prelude* in which the child learns about the world in his mother's arms

Blest the infant Babe  
(For with my best conjecture I would trace  
Our Being's earthly progress) blest the Babe  
Nursed in his Mother's arms who sinks to sleep  
Rocked on his Mother's breast who with his soul  
Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!  
For him in one dear Presence there exists  
A virtue which irradiates and exalts  
Objects through widest intercourse of sense  
No outcast he bewildered and depressed  
Along his infant veins are interfused  
The gravitation and the filial bond  
Of nature that connect him with the world  
Is there a flower to which he points with hand  
Too weak to gather it already love  
Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him  
Hath beautified that flower already shades  
Of pity cast from inward tenderness  
Do fall around him upon aught that bears  
Unsightly marks of violence or harm  
Emphatically such a Being lives  
Frail creature as he is helpless as frail  
An inmate of this active universe  
For feeling has to him imparted power  
That through the growing faculties of sense  
Doth like an agent of the one great Mind  
Create creator and receiver both  
Working but in alliance with the works  
Which it beholds—Such verily is the first  
Poetic<sup>7</sup> spirit of our human life  
By uniform control of after years  
In most abated or suppressed in some  
Through every change of growth and of decay  
Pre eminent till death

The child this passage says, does not perceive things merely as objects; he first sees them because maternal love is a condition of his perception, as objects and judgments, as valued objects. He does not learn about a flower but about the pretty flower, the flower that I want and that mother will get for me; he does not learn about the bird and a broken wing but about the poor bird whose wing was broken. The safety, warmth and good feeling of his mother's conscious benevolence is a circumstance of his first learning. He sees in short with glory not only is he himself not in utter nakedness as the Ode puts it but the objects he sees are not in utter nakedness. The passage from *The Prelude* says in naturalistic language what stanza v of the Ode expresses by a theistical metaphor. Both the *Prelude*

The use here of the word "poetic" is either metaphorical and general or it is entirely literal; that is it refers to the root meaning of the word which is to make.—Wordsworth has in mind the creative nature of right human perception and not merely poetry.

passage and the Ode distinguish a state of exile from a state of security and comfort of at homeness there is (as the *Prelude* passage puts it) a filial bond or (as in stanza x of the Ode) a primal sympathy which keeps man from being an outcast bewildered and depressed

The Ode and *The Prelude* differ about the source of this primal sympathy of filial bond. The Ode makes heavenly pre-existence the source. *The Prelude* finds the source in maternal affection. But the psychologists tell us that notions of heavenly pre-existence figure commonly as representations of physical prenatality—the womb is the environment which is perfectly adapted to its inmate and compared to it all other conditions of life may well seem like exile to the (very literal) outcast.<sup>8</sup> Even the security of the mother's arms although it is an effort to re-create for the child the old environment is but a diminished comfort. And if we think of the experience of which Wordsworth is speaking as the vanishings as the child's recollection of a condition in which it was very nearly true that he and his environment were one it will not seem surprising that Wordsworth should compound the two experiences and figure them in the single metaphor of the glorious heavenly pre-existence.<sup>9</sup>

I have tried to be as naturalistic as possible in speaking of Wordsworth's childhood experiences and the more or less Platonic notion they suggested to him. I believe that naturalism is in order here for what we must now see is that Wordsworth is talking about something common to us all: the development of the sense of reality. To have once had the visionary gleam of the perfect union of the self and the universe is essential to and definitive of our human nature and it is in that sense connected with the making of poetry. But the visionary gleam is not in itself the poetry-making power, and its diminution is right and inevitable.

That there should be ambivalence in Wordsworth's response to this diminution is quite natural, and the two answers—that of stanzas v-viii and that of stanzas ix-xi—comprise both the resistance to and the acceptance of growth. Inevitably we resist change and turn back with passionate nostalgia to the stage we are leaving. Still we fulfill ourselves by choosing what is painful and difficult and necessary, and we

develop by moving toward death. In short organic development is a hard paradox which Wordsworth is stating in the discrepant answers of the second part of the Ode. And it seems to me that those critics who made the Ode refer to some particular and unique experience of Wordsworth's and who make it relate only to poetical powers have forgotten their own lives and in consequence conceive the Ode to be a lesser thing than it really is for it is not about poetry; it is about life. And having made this error, they are inevitably led to misinterpret the meaning of the philosophic mind and also to deny that Wordsworth's ambivalence is sincere. No doubt it would not be a sincere ambivalence if Wordsworth were really saying farewell to poetry; it would merely be an attempt at self-consolation. But he is not saying farewell to poetry; he is saying farewell to Eden and his ambivalence is much what Adam's was, and Milton's and for the same reasons.<sup>10</sup>

To speak naturalistically of the quasi-mystical experiences of his childhood does not in the least bring into question the value which Wordsworth attached to them, for despite its dominating theistic metaphor the Ode is largely naturalistic in its intention. We can begin to see what that intention is by understanding the force of the word imperial in stanza vi. This stanza is the second of the four stanzas in which Wordsworth states and develops the theme of the reminiscence of the light of heaven and its gradual evanescence through the maturing years. In stanza v we are told that the infant inhabits it; the Boy beholds it; seeing it in his joy the Youth is still attended by it; the Man perceives it die away / And fade into the light of common day. Stanza vi speaks briefly of the efforts made by earthly life to bring about the natural and inevitable amnesia.

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own  
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind  
And even with something of a Mother's mind,  
And no unworthy aim  
The homely Nurse doth all she can  
To make her Foster-child her Inmate Man  
Forget the glories he hath known  
And that imperial palace whence he came

Imperial suggests grandeur, dignity and splendor, everything that stands in opposition to what, in *The*

<sup>8</sup> Before born babe bliss had Within womb won he worship  
Whatever in that one case done commodiously done was —James Joyce *Ulysses*. The myth of Eden is also interpreted as figuring either childhood or the womb—see below Wordsworth's statement of the connection of the notion of pre-existence with Adam's fall.

<sup>9</sup> Readers of Ferenczi's remarkable study *Thalassa*—a discussion admittedly speculative but wonderfully fascinating of unconscious racial memories of the ocean as the ultimate source of life—will not be able to resist giving an added meaning to Wordsworth's lines about the immortal sea/Which brought us hither and of the un-born children who Sport upon the shore. The recollection of Samuel Butler's delightful fantasy of the Unborn and his theory of unconscious memory will also serve to enrich our reading of the Ode by suggesting the continuing force of the Platonic myth.

<sup>10</sup> Milton provides a possible gloss to several difficult points in the poem. In stanza viii the Child is addressed as 'thou Eye among the blind' and to the Eye are applied the epithets 'deaf and silent'. Coleridge objected to these epithets as irrational but his objection may be met by citing the brilliant precedent of 'blind mouths' of Lycidas. Again Coleridge's question of the propriety of making a master brood over a slave is in part answered by the sonnet 'On His Being Arrived at the Age of Twenty-three' in which Milton expresses his security in his development as it shall take place in his great Task-master's eye. Between this sonnet and the Ode there are other significant correspondences of thought and of phrase: there are also correspondences to the Ode in the sonnet 'On His Blindness'.

*Excursion* Wordsworth was to call littleness. And littleness is the result of having wrong notions about the nature of man and his connection with the universe: its outcome is deadness. The melancholy and despair of the Solitary in *The Excursion* are the signs of the deadness which resulted from his having conceived of man as something less than imperial. Wordsworth's idea of splendid power is his protest against all views of the mind that would limit and debase it. By conceiving as he does an intimate connection between mind and universe by seeing the universe fitted to the mind and the mind to the universe he bestows upon man a dignity which cannot be derived from looking at him in the actualities of common life from seeing him engaged in business in morality and politics.

Yet here we must credit Wordsworth with the double vision. Man must be conceived of as imperial but he must also be seen as he actually is in the field of life. The earth is not an environment in which the celestial or imperial qualities can easily exist. Wordsworth who spoke of the notion of imperial pre-existence as being adumbrated by Adam's fall uses the words earth and earthly in the common quasi-religious sense to refer to the things of this world. He does not make Earth synonymous with Nature for although Man may be the true child of Nature he is the Foster child of Earth. But it is to be observed that the foster mother is a kindly one that her disposition is at least quasi-maternal that her aims are at least not unworthy: she is in short the foster mother who figures so often in the legend of the Hero whose real and unknown parents are noble or divine.<sup>11</sup>

Wordsworth in short is looking at man in a double way seeing man both in his ideal nature and in his earthly activity. The two views do not so much contradict as supplement each other. If in stanzas v-viii Wordsworth tells us that we live by decrease in stanzas ix-xi he tells us of the everlasting connection of the diminished person with his own ideal personality. The child hands on to the hampered adult the imperial nature the primal sympathy/Which having been must ever be the mind fitted to the universe the universe to the mind. The sympathy is not so pure and intense in maturity as in childhood but only because another relation grows up beside the relation of man to Nature—the relation of man to his fellows in the moral world of difficulty and pain. Given Wordsworth's epistemology the new relation is bound to change the very aspect of Nature itself: the clouds will take a sober coloring from an eye

that hath kept watch o'er man's mortality but a sober color is a color still.

There is sorrow in the Ode the inevitable sorrow of giving up an old habit of vision for a new one. In shifting the center of his interest from Nature to man in the field of morality Wordsworth is fulfilling his own conception of the three ages of man which Professor Beatty has expounded so well. The shift in interest he called the coming of the philosophic mind but the word philosophic does not have here either of two of its meanings in common usage—it does not mean abstract and it does not mean apathetic. Wordsworth is not saying and it is sentimental and unimaginative of us to say that he has become less a feeling man and less a poet. He is only saying that he has become less a youth. Indeed the Ode is so little a farewell to art so little a dirge sung over departing powers that it is actually the very opposite—it is a welcome of new powers and a dedication to a new poetic subject. For if sensitivity and responsiveness be among the poetic powers what else is Wordsworth saying at the end of the poem except that he has a greater sensitivity and responsiveness than ever before? The philosophic mind has not decreased but on the contrary increased the power to feel.

The clouds that gather round the setting sun  
Do take a sober colouring from an eye  
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality  
Another race hath been and other palms are won  
Thanks to the human heart by which we live  
Thanks to its tenderness its joys and fears  
To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears

The meanest flower is significant now not only because like the small celandine it speaks of age suffering and death but because to a man who is aware of man's mortality the word becomes significant and precious. The knowledge of man's mortality—this must be carefully noted in a poem presumably about immortality—now replaces the glory as the agency which makes things significant and precious. We are back again at optics which we have never really left and the Ode in a very honest fashion has come full circle.

The new poetic powers of sensitivity and responsiveness are new not so much in degree as in kind, they would therefore seem to require a new poetic subject matter for their exercise. And the very definition of the new powers seems to imply what the new subject matter must be—thoughts that lie too deep for tears are ideally the thoughts which are brought to mind by tragedy. It would be an extravagant but not an absurd reading of the Ode that found it to be Wordsworth's farewell to the characteristic mode of his poetry the mode that Keats called the ego

<sup>11</sup> Carlyle makes elaborate play with this idea in his account of Teufelsdröckh and see the essay on *The Princess Casamassima* in this volume page 65. The fantasy that their parents are really foster parents is a common one with children and it is to be associated with the various forms of the belief that the world is not real. [See p. 65 Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination*.]

tistical sublime and a dedication to the mode of tragedy. But the tragic mode could not be Wordsworth's. He did not have the negative capability which Keats believed to be the source of Shakespeare's power: the gift of being able to be content with half knowledge, to give up the irritable reaching after fact and reason, to remain in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts. In this he was at one with all the poets of the Romantic Movement and after—negative capability was impossible for them to come by and tragedy was not for them. But although Wordsworth did not realize the new kind of art which seems implied by his sense of new powers, yet his bold declaration that he had acquired a new way of feeling makes it impossible for us to go on saying that the Ode was his conscious farewell to his art, a huge sun going over his departing powers.

Still, was there not after the composition of the Ode, a great falling off in his genius which we are drawn to connect with the crucial changes the Ode records? That there was a falling off is certain although we must observe that it was not so sharp as is commonly held and also that it did not occur immediately or even soon after the composition of the first four stanzas with their statement that the visionary gleam had gone. On the contrary, some of the most striking of Wordsworth's verse was written at this time. It must be remembered too that another statement of the loss of the visionary gleam that made in Tintern Abbey had been followed by all the superb production of the great decade—an objection which is sometimes dealt with by saying that Wordsworth wrote his best work from his near memories of the gleam and that as he grew older and moved farther from it his recollection dimmed and thus he lost his power. It is an explanation which suggests that mechanical and simple notions of the mind and of the poetic process are all too tempting to those who speculate on Wordsworth's decline. Given the fact of the great power, the desire to explain its relative deterioration will no doubt always be irresistible. But we must be aware in any attempt to make this explanation that an account of why Wordsworth ceased to write great poetry must at the same time be an account of how he once did write great poetry. And this latter account in our present state of knowledge we cannot begin to furnish.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What techniques of criticism does Trilling employ?
2. With what other critics represented here is he most closely allied? With whom does he most differ?
3. Can the techniques he uses be applied to other poems?
4. Has the biographical data about Wordsworth which he uses genuine relevance to the understanding of the poem? Would you get as much out of the poem if you did not have this particular information about the poet? Would Trilling's conclusions be invalidated if it turned out that his biographical information was incorrect?
5. Has a reading of his essay helped your understanding and appreciation of the poem?

## No Credit

KENNETH FEARING

Whether dinner was pleasant with the windows lit  
by gunfire and no one disagreed or whether  
later we argued in the park and there was  
a touch of vomit gas in the evening air 4  
whether we found a greater, deeper, more perfect  
love by courtesy of Camels over NBC  
whether the comics amused us or the news  
papers carried a hunger death and published  
a White House prayer for Mother's Day 9  
whether the bills were paid or not whether or not  
we had our doubts whether we spoke our  
minds at Joe's and the receipt said 'Not Re-  
deemable, and the cash register rang up No  
Sale 14  
whether the truth was then or later or whether  
the best had already gone—

Nevertheless we know as every turn is measured as  
every unavoidable risk is known  
as nevertheless the flesh grows old, dies, dies in  
its only life is gone 20  
the reflection goes from the mirror as the shadow,  
of even a Communist, is gone from the wall  
as nevertheless, the current is thrown and the  
wheels revolve and nevertheless is the word  
is spoken and the wheat grows tall and the  
ships sail on— 26

None but the fool is paid in full none but the broker,  
none but the scab is certain of profit  
the sheriff alone may attend a third degree in  
formal attire alone the academy artists mul-  
tiply in dignity as a trooper's bayonet guards  
the door 32  
only Steve the side show robot, knows content  
only Steve, the mechanical man in love with  
a photo electric beam remains aloof only  
Steve who sits and smokes or stands in salute,  
is secure 37  
Steve, whose shoebutton eyes are blind to terror

whose painted ears are deaf to appeal    whose  
welded breast will never be slashed by bullets  
whose armature soul can hold no fear



*Time's Wingèd Chariot*  
*The Pleasures of Love*

The theme around which this and the next two groups of poems center is love. No theme in lyric poetry has been treated more often or in greater variety of ways or for more diversified purposes so that only three of its many aspects can be illustrated here: the pleasures, the sorrows, and the triumphs.

Though lyric poetry has at its disposal a large number of forms of expression the experiences it best communicates are those which are intense passionate and relatively uncomplicated by thought hence the peculiar fitness of the union of lyric poetry and the theme of love We begin with a sonnet by Shakespeare Though the idea of the sonnet is conventional enough the way in which it is developed shows unmistakably the hand of the master The sonnet is in musical terms a theme and variations each variation being similar in thought to the others but different in the metaphor it employs and all leading to the final couplet which neatly reverses the direction of the flow of thought of the three quatrains and so rounds off the paradox which the sonnet explores the first quatrain in particular is notable for the economical manner in which it compresses a difficult idea within its boundaries In contrast is Donne's Elegie which is tough realistic and earthy it exemplifies a reaction against the love poetry of the Elizabethans similar to that of our own against the Edwardians and for much the same reasons The pleasure of Donne's poem is to be found in the cynical play of a subtle and coruscating mind and the same play of mind though toned down and smoothed out provides the key to the understanding of Marvell's lyric on the *carpe diem* theme Here the wit resides in the tacit assumption between the lovers that what will move her is not crass appeal to her senses but the much more flattering appeal to her mind the elaborate rules of the Renaissance game of love are mocked not by opposing them but by carrying them to the ultimately absurd ends Pope's Pastoral purposely avoids real passion truly felt for such passion would destroy the delicate surface of the pastoral convention Like Handel's pastoral music Pope's pastoral poem achieves its effects by its artful air of artificiality and the more carefully it observes the literary conventions of the pastoral form the more it avoids reality of language and image the more successful a genre piece it becomes The love lyrics by Burns and Browning seek

just the opposite ends and by opposite means that of real passion deeply felt and simply expressed But like all love poems in the grand style they totter perilously on the edge of bathos without actually falling over and this is the measure of their merit

## Like as the Waves

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore  
So do our minutes hasten to their end  
Each changing place with that which goes before  
In sequent toil all forwards do contend

Nativity once in the main of light                    5  
Crawls to maturity wherewith being crowned  
Crooked eclipses gainst his glory fight  
And Time that gave, doth now his gift confound

Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth  
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow 10  
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth  
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow —

And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand  
Praising thy worth despite his cruel hand

To His Mistress Going  
to Bed

JOHN DONNE

Come, Madam come, all rest my powers defy,  
 Until I labor I in labor lie  
 The foe oft times having the foe in sight  
 Is tired with standing though he never fight  
 Off with that girdle, like heaven's zone glittering  
 But a far fairer world encompassing  
 Unpin that spangled breastplate which you wear  
 That thy eyes of busy fools may be stopped there  
 Unlace your self for that harmonious chime  
 Tells me from you that now it is bed time  
 Off with that happy busk which I envy,  
 That still can be and still can stand so nigh  
 Your gown going off, much beauteous state reveals  
 As when from flowery meads the hills shadow steals  
 Off with that wiry coronet and show  
 That hary diadem which on you doth grow  
 Now off with those shoes, and then safely tread  
 In this love's hallowed temple, this soft bed  
 In such white robes, heaven's angels used to be  
 Received by men thou angel bringst with thee



A heaven like Mahomet's paradise and though  
 Ill spirits walk in white, we easily know,  
 By this these angels from an evil sprite  
 Those set our hairs but these our flesh upright  
 License my roving hands and let them go 25  
 Before, behind between above below  
 O my America! my new found land  
 My kingdom, safest when with one man manned,  
 My mine of precious stones my Emperie,  
 How blest am I in this discovering thee! 30  
 To enter in these bonds is to be free  
 Then where my hand is set, my seal shall be  
 Full nakedness! All joys are due to thee  
 As souls unbodied bodies unclothed must be,  
 To taste whole joys Gems which you women use 35  
 Are like Atlanta's balls cast in men's views  
 That when a fool's eye lighteth on a Gem,  
 His earthly soul may covet theirs not them  
 Like pictures or like books gay coverings made  
 For laymen are all women thus arrayed 40  
 Themselves are mystic books which only we  
 (Whom their imputed grace will dignify)  
 Must see revealed Then since that I may know,  
 As liberally as to a midwife show  
 Thy self cast all, yea this white linen hence 45  
 There is no penance much less innocence  
 To teach thee, I am naked first, why then  
 What needst thou have more covering than a man

## To His Coy Mistress

ANDREW MARVELL

Had we but world enough and time,  
 This coyness Lady, were no crime  
 We would sit down and think which way  
 To walk and pass our long love's day  
 Thou by the Indian Ganges side 5  
 Shouldst rubies find I by the tide  
 Of Humber would complain I would  
 Love you ten years before the Flood  
 And you should if you please refuse  
 Till the conversion of the Jews 10  
 My vegetable love should grow  
 Vaster than empires, and more slow  
 An hundred years should go to praise  
 Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze  
 Two hundred to adore each breast, 15  
 But thirty thousand to the rest  
 An age at least to every part,  
 And the last age should show your heart  
 For, Lady you deserve this state  
 Nor would I love at lower rate 20  
 But at my back I always hear  
 Time's winged Chariot hurrying near  
 And yonder all before us lie

Deserts of vast eternity  
 Thy beauty shall no more be found 25  
 Nor, in thy marble vault shall sound  
 My echoing song then worms shall try  
 That long preserv'd virginity  
 And your quaint honor turn to dust  
 And into ashes all my lust 30  
 The grave's a fine and private place  
 But none, I think do there embrace  
 Now therefore, while the youthful hue  
 Sits on thy skin like morning dew  
 And while thy willing soul transpires 35  
 At every pore with instant fires  
 Now let us sport us while we may  
 And now like amorous birds of prey  
 Rather at once our time devour  
 Than languish in his slow chapt power 40  
 Let us roll all our strength and all  
 Our sweetness up into one ball  
 And tear our pleasures with rough strife  
 Thorough the iron gates of life  
 Thus though we cannot make our sun 45  
 Stand still yet we will make him run

## Spring

ALEXANDER POPE

THE FIRST PASTORAL, OR DAMON  
 TO SIR WILLIAM TRUMBAL

First in these fields I try the sylvan strams,  
 Nor blush to sport on Windsor's blissful plains  
 Fair Thames flow gently from thy sacred spring  
 While on thy banks Sicilian Muses sing  
 Let vernal airs through trembling osiers play, 5  
 And Albion's cliffs resound the rural lay  
 You that, too wise for pride, too good for power  
 Enjoy the glory to be great no more  
 And, carrying with you all the world can boast  
 To all the world illustriously are lost! 10  
 Oh, let my Muse her slender reed inspire  
 Till in your native shades you tune the lyre,  
 So when the nightingale to rest removes  
 The thrush may chant to the forsaken groves  
 But, charmed to silence listens while she sings, 15  
 And all the aerial audience clap their wings  
 Soon as the flocks shook off the nightly dews  
 Two swans, whom love kept wakeful and the Muse  
 Poured o'er the whitening vale their fleecy care  
 Fresh as the morn and as the season fair 20  
 The dawn now blushing on the mountain's side  
 Thus Daphnis spoke, and Stephon thus replied  
 DAPHNIS Hear how the birds on every bloomy spray  
 With joyous music wake the dawning day!

Why sit we mute, when early linnets sing 25  
 When warbling Philomel salutes the spring?  
 Why sit we sad when Phosphor shines so clear  
 And lavish Nature paints the purple year?  
 STREPHON Sing then, and Damon shall attend the  
 strain  
 While yon slow oxen turn the furrowed plun 30  
 Here the bright crocus and blue violet glow  
 Here western winds on breathing roses blow  
 I'll stake yon lamb that near the fountain plays  
 And from the brink his dancing shade surveys 35  
 DAPHNIS And I this bowl where wanton ivy twines  
 And swelling clusters bend the curling vines  
 Four figures rising from the work appear  
 The various seasons of the rowling year,  
 And what is that which binds the radiant sky  
 Where twelve fair signs in beauteous order lie? 40  
 DAMON Then sing by turns by turns the Muses sing  
 Now hawthorns blossom now the daisies spring  
 Now leaves the trees and flowers adorn the  
 ground  
 Begin, the vales shall every note rebound 45  
 STREPHON Inspire me Phoebus in my Delia's praise  
 With Waller's strains or Granville's moving lays!  
 A mule white bull shall at your altars stand  
 That threatens a fight and spins the rising sand  
 DAPHNIS O love! for Sylvia let me gain the prize  
 And make my tongue victorious as her eyes 50  
 No lambs or sheep for victims I'll impart  
 Thy victim love shall be the shepherd's heart  
 STREPHON Me gentle Delia beckons from the plain,  
 Then hid in shades eludes her eager swain  
 But feigns a laugh to see me search around 55  
 And by that laugh the willing fair is found  
 DAPHNIS The sprightly Sylvia trips along the green  
 She runs but hopes she does not run unseen,  
 While a kind glance at her pursuer flies  
 How much at variance are her feet and eyes! 60  
 STREPHON O'er golden sands let rich Pactolus flow  
 And trees weep amber on the banks of Po  
 Blest Thames's shores the brightest beauties yield  
 Feed here my lambs I'll seek no distant field  
 DAPHNIS Celestial Venus haunts Idalia's groves 65  
 Diana Cynthus Ceres Hybla loves  
 If Windsor shades delight the matchless maid  
 Cynthus and Hybla yield to Windsor shade  
 STREPHON All nature mourns the skies relent in  
 showers,  
 Hushed are the birds and closed the drooping  
 flowers 70  
 If Delia smile, the flowers begin to spring  
 The skies to brighten, and the birds to sing  
 DAPHNIS All nature laughs, the groves are fresh and  
 fair  
 The sun's mild lustre warms the vital air  
 If Sylvia smiles new glories gild the shore 75  
 And vanquished nature seems to charm no more

STREPHON In spring the fields in autumn hills I love,  
 At morn the plains, at noon the shady grove,  
 But Delia always absent from her sight  
 Nor plains at morn nor groves at noon delight 80  
 DAPHNIS Sylvia's like autumn ripe yet mild as May  
 More bright than noon yet fresh as early day  
 Even spring displeases when she shines not here  
 But blest with her, tis spring throughout the year  
 STREPHON Say, Daphnis say in what glad soil ap  
 pears, 85  
 A wonderous tree that sacred monarchs bears?  
 Tell me but this and I'll disclaim the prize  
 And give the conquest to thy Sylvia's eyes  
 DAPHNIS Nay tell me first in what more happy  
 fields  
 The thistle springs to which the lily yields? 90  
 And then a nobler prize I will resign  
 For Sylvia charming Sylvia shall be thine  
 DAMON Cease to contend for Daphnis I decree  
 The bowl to Strephon and the lamb to thee 95  
 Blest swains whose nymphs in every grace excel  
 Blest nymphs whose swains those graces sing so  
 well!  
 Now rise and haste to yonder woodbine bowers  
 A soft retreat from sudden vernal showers  
 The turf with rural dainties shall be crowned 99  
 While opening blooms diffuse their sweets around  
 For see! the gathering flocks to shelter tend  
 And from the Pleiads fruitful showers descend

## Jean

ROBERT BURNS

Of a the aunts the wind can blow  
 I dearly like the West  
 For there the bonnie lassie lives  
 The lassie I love best  
 There wild woods grow and rivers row 5  
 And mony a hill between,  
 But day and night my fancy's flight  
 Is ever wi' my Jean  
 I see her in the dewy flowers  
 I see her sweet and fair 10  
 I hear her in the tuneful birds  
 I hear her charm the air  
 There's not a bonnie flower that springs  
 By fountain shaw or green  
 There's not a bonnie bird that sings 15  
 But minds me o' my Jean  
 O blow ye westlin winds blow soft  
 Among the leafy trees  
 Wi' balmy gale frae hill and dale  
 Bring hame the laden bees 20

And bring the lassie back to me  
 That's aye sae neat and clean,  
 Ae smile o' her wad banish care  
 Sae charming is my Jean

What sighs and vows among the knowes 25  
 Hae pass'd atween us twa!  
 How fond to meet how wae to part  
 That night she gaed awa!  
 The Powers aboon can only ken 30  
 To whom the heart is seen  
 That nane can be sae dear to me  
 As my sweet lovely Jean!

## Meeting at Night

ROBERT BROWNING

### I

The grey sea and the long black land,  
 And the yellow half moon large and low,  
 And the startled little waves that leap  
 In fiery ringlets from their sleep  
 As I gain the cove with pushing prow,  
 And quench its speed in the slushy sand

### II

Then a mile of warm sea scented beach  
 Three fields to cross till a farm appears  
 A tap at the pane the quick sharp scratch 10  
 And blue spurt of a lighted match  
 And a voice less loud through its joys and fears  
 Than the two hearts beating each to each!

## and Parting at Morning

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea  
 And the sun looked over the mountain's rim—  
 And straight was a path of gold for him  
 And the need of a world of men for me



## Silence and Tears The Sorrows of Love

Like a late quartet of Beethoven the sonnet by Shakespeare is somber complex in thought and infused with a fierce passion controlled by mastery over the form. Eschewing pictorial imagery the sonnet uses bare words but words of passion powerfully arranged its rhythms

are broken and savage and it strikes out at us with tremendous impact in its revulsion against love itself. If Shakespeare in this sonnet seems to speak from out of the very depths of passion Dryden and Suckling dance lightly on the surface of love in graceful arabesques of cynicism and wit. The game of love is being played for all that it is worth but not a jot more and it remains only a sport.

The passion you pretended  
 Was onely to obtain  
 But when the charm is ended  
 The charmer you disdain

But when the sport turns serious when the mark is overstepped then there can be only silence and tears fallen leaves and cold winds and

the broad light glares and beats  
 And the shadow flits and fleets  
 And will not let me be  
 And I loathe the squares and streets  
 And the faces that one meets  
 Hearts with no love for me

Here then are three explorations of the still deep caverns of lost love the cold death of love of Byron the senseless pursuit of love of Tennyson and the passion of Yeats

## The Expense of Spirit

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame  
 Is lust in action and till action lust  
 Is perjured murderous bloody full of blame  
 Savage extreme, rude cruel not to trust 5  
 Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight  
 Past reason hunted, and no sooner had  
 Past reason hated, as a swallowed bait  
 On purpose laid to make the taker mad

Mad in pursuit and in possession so  
 Had having, and in quest to have extreme 10  
 A bliss in proof and proved a very woe  
 Before a joy proposed behind a dream  
 All this the world well knows yet none knows well  
 To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell

## 'Tis Now, Since I

SIR JOHN SUCKLING

'Tis now since I sat down before  
 That foolish fort a heart  
 (Time strangely spent) a year and more  
 And still I did my part

Made my approaches from her hand  
 Unto her lip did rise  
 And did already understand  
 The language of her eyes

Proceeded on with no less art  
 My tongue was engineer  
 I thought to undermine the heart  
 By whispering in the ear

When this did nothing I brought down  
 Great cannon oaths and shot  
 A thousand thousands to the town  
 And still it yielded not

I then resolved to starve the place  
 By cutting off all kisses  
 Praising and gazing on her face  
 And all such little blisses

To draw her out and from her strength  
 I drew all batteries in  
 And brought myself to lie at length  
 As if no siege had been

When I had done what man could do  
 And thought the place mine own  
 The enemy lay quiet too,  
 And smiled at all was done

I sent to know from whence and where  
 These hopes and this relief  
 A spy informed, Honor was there  
 And did command in chief

March march quoth I the word straight give  
 Let's lose no time but leave her  
 That grant upon all will live  
 And hold it out forever

To such a place our camp remove  
 As will no siege abide  
 I hate a fool that starves her love  
 Only to feed her pride

## "Songs" from the Plays

JOHN DRYDEN

*From Marriage a la Mode*

I

Why should a foolish marriage vow  
 Which long ago was made,  
 Oblige us to each other now  
 When passion is decayed?

5 We loved and we loved as long as we could 5  
 Till our love was loved out in us both  
 But our marriage is dead when the pleasure is fled  
 'Twas pleasure first made it an oath

II

10 If I have pleasures for a friend, 10  
 And farther love in store  
 What wrong has he whose joys did end  
 And who could give no more?

15 'Tis a madness that he 15  
 Should be jealous of me  
 Or that I should bar him of another  
 For all we can gain is to give ourselves pain  
 When neither can hinder the other

20 From *The Spanish Friar*

I

Farewell ungrateful traitor  
 Farewell my perjured sworn  
 Let never injured creature  
 Believe a man again  
 25 The pleasure of possessing 5  
 Surpasses all expressing  
 But 'tis too short a blessing,  
 And love too long a pain

II

30 'Tis easy to deceive us 10  
 In pity of your pain  
 But when we love you leave us  
 To rail at you in vain  
 Before we have descried it  
 35 There is no bliss beside it 15  
 But she that once has tried it  
 Will never love again

III

The passion you pretended  
 Was onely to obtain  
 40 But when the charm is ended 20  
 The charmer you disdain  
 Your love by ours we measure  
 Till we have lost our treasure  
 But dying is a pleasure  
 When living is a pain

SONG OF JEALOUSY

*From Love Triumphant*

I

What state of life can be so blest  
 As love, that warms a lover's breast?

Two souls in one the same desire  
 To grant the bliss and to require!  
 But if in heaven a hell we find  
 'Tis all from thee  
 O jealousy!  
 Thou tyrant tyrant jealousy  
 Thou tyrant of the mind!

## II

All other ills though sharp they prove  
 Serve to refine and perfect love  
 In absence or unkind disdain  
 Sweet hope relieves the lover's pain  
 But ah no cure but death we find  
 To set us free  
 From jealousy  
 O jealousy!  
 Thou tyrant tyrant jealousy,  
 Thou tyrant of the mind

## III

False in thy glass all objects are  
 Some set too near and some too far,  
 Thou art the fire of endless night  
 The fire that burns and gives no light  
 All torments of the damned we find  
 In only thee  
 O jealousy!  
 Thou tyrant tyrant jealousy,  
 Thou tyrant of the mind!

## ROUNDELEY

## I

*Chloe* found *Amyntas* lying  
 All in tears upon the plain,  
 Sighing to himself and crying  
 Wretched I, to love in vain!  
 Kiss me dear, before my dying  
 Kiss me once, and ease my pain

## II

Sighing to himself and crying  
 Wretched I, to love in vain!  
 Ever scorning and denying  
 To reward your faithful swain  
 Kiss me dear before my dying  
 Kiss me once, and ease my pain!

## III

Ever scorning, and denying  
 To reward your faithful swain  
*Chloe*, laughing at his crying  
 Told him that he loved in vain  
 Kiss me, dear, before my dying  
 Kiss me once and ease my pain!

## IV

*Chloe* laughing at his crying  
 Told him that he loved in vain  
 But repenting and complying,  
 When he kissed, she kissed again  
 Kissed him up before his dying  
 Kissed him up and eased his pain

20

## When We Two Parted

GEORGE GORDON LORD BYRON

When we two parted  
 In silence and tears,  
 Half broken hearted  
 To sever for years  
 Pale grew thy cheek and cold,  
 Colder thy kiss,  
 Truly that hour foretold  
 Sorrow to this

5

The dew of the morning  
 Sunk chill on my brow—  
 It felt like the warning  
 Of what I feel now  
 Thy vows are all broken  
 And light is thy fame,  
 I hear thy name spoken,  
 And share in its shame

10

They name thee before me,  
 A knell to mine ear  
 A shudder comes o'er me—  
 Why wert thou so dear?  
 They know not I knew thee  
 Who knew thee too well—  
 Long long shall I rue thee,  
 Too deeply to tell

20

In secret we met—  
 In silence I grieve  
 That thy heart could forget,  
 Thy spirit deceive  
 If I should meet thee  
 After long years  
 How should I greet thee?  
 With silence and tears

25

30

## O That 'Twere Possible

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

O that 'twere possible  
 After long grief and pain

15

To find the arms of my true love  
Round me once again!

When I was wont to meet her  
In the silent woody places  
By the home that gave me both  
We stood tranced in long embraces  
Mixt with kisses sweeter sweeter  
Than anything on earth

A shadow flits before me,  
Not thou, but like to thee  
Ah Christ, that it were possible  
For one short hour to see  
The souls we loved, that they might tell us  
What and where they be

It leads me forth at evening,  
It lightly winds and steals  
In a cold white robe before me,  
When all my spirit reels  
At the shouts, the leagues of lights  
And the roaring of the wheels

Half the night I waste in sighs  
Half in dreams I sorrow after  
The delight of early skies  
In a wakeful doze I sorrow  
For the hand the lips the eyes,  
For the meeting of the morrow,  
The delight of happy laughter  
The delight of low replies

'Tis a morning pure and sweet,  
And a dewy splendor falls  
On the little flower that clings  
To the turrets and the walls  
'Tis a morning pure and sweet  
And the light and shadow fleet,  
She is walking in the meadow,  
And the woodland echo rings,  
In a moment we shall meet,  
She is singing in the meadow  
And the rivulet at her feet  
Ripples on in light and shadow  
To the ballad that she sings

Do I hear her sing as of old  
My bird with the shining head  
My own dove with the tender eye?  
But there rings on a sudden a passionate cry  
There is some one dying or dead  
And a sullen thunder is rolled,  
For a tumult shakes the city,  
And I wake, my dream is fled  
In the shuddering dawn, behold  
Without knowledge without pity  
By the curtains of my bed  
That abiding phantom cold

Get thee hence nor come again  
Mix not memory with doubt  
Pass thou deathlike type of pain  
Pass and cease to move about!  
'Tis the blot upon the brain  
That will show itself without

Then I rise, the eavedrops fall,  
And the yellow vapors choke  
The great city sounding wide  
The day comes a dull red ball  
Wrapt in drifts of lurid smoke  
On the misty river tide

Through the hubbub of the market  
I steal a wasted frame,  
It crosses here it crosses there,  
Through all that crowd confused and loud  
The shadow still the same,  
And on my heavy eyelids  
My anguish hangs like shame

Alas for her that met me,  
That heard me softly call  
Came glimmering through the laurels  
At the quiet of evenfall  
In the garden by the turrets  
Of the old manorial hall

Would the happy spirit descend  
From the realms of light and song,  
In the chamber on the street  
As she looks among the blest  
Should I fear to greet my friend  
Or to say Forgive the wrong,  
Or to ask her, Take me sweet  
To the regions of thy rest?

But the broad light glares and beats  
And the shadow flits and fleets  
And will not let me be  
And I loathe the squares and streets  
And the faces that one meets  
Hearts with no love for me  
Always I long to creep  
Into some still cavern deep  
There to weep and weep and weep  
My whole soul out to thee

## Leda and the Swan

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

A sudden blow the great wings beating still  
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed  
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,





With goodly greenish locks, all loose untied  
 As each had been a bride  
 And each one had a little wicker basket  
 Made of fine twigs entwined curiously 25  
 In which they gathered flowers to fill their flasket  
 And with fine fingers cleft full feateously  
 The tender stalks on high  
 Of every sort which in that meadow grew  
 They gathered some the violet pallid blue 30  
 The little daisy that at evening closes  
 The virgin lily and the primrose true  
 With store of vermeil roses  
 To deck their bridegroom's posies  
 Against the bridal day which was not long— 35  
 Sweet Thames! run softly till I end my song

With that I saw two swans of goodly hue  
 Come softly swimming down along the Lee  
 Two fairer birds I yet did never see  
 The snow which doth the top of Pindus strew 40  
 Did never whiter shew  
 Nor Jove himself when he a swan would be  
 For love of Leda whiter did appear  
 Yet Leda was they say as white as he  
 Yet not so white as these nor nothing near 45  
 So purely white they were  
 That even the gentle stream the which them bare  
 Seemed foul to them and bade his billows spare  
 To wet their silken feathers lest they might  
 Soil their fair plumes with water not so fair 50  
 And mar then beauties bright  
 That shone as heaven's light  
 Against their bridal day which was not long—  
 Sweet Thames! run softly till I end my song

Eftsoons the nymphs which now had flowers then  
 fill 55  
 Ran all in haste to see that silver brood  
 As they came floating on the crystal flood  
 Whom when they saw they stood amazed still  
 Their wondering eyes to fill  
 Them seemed they never saw a sight so fair 60  
 Of fowls so lovely that they sure did deem  
 Them heavenly born or to be that same pair  
 Which through the sky drew Venus silver team  
 For sure they did not seem  
 To be begot of any earthly seed, 65  
 But rather angels or of angels breed  
 Yet were they bred of summer's heat they say  
 In sweetest season when each flower and weed  
 The earth did fresh array  
 So fresh they seemed as day 70  
 Even as their bridal day which was not long—  
 Sweet Thames! run softly till I end my song

Then forth they all out of their baskets drew  
 Great store of flowers the honor of the field  
 That to the sense did fragrant odors yield 75

All which upon those goodly birds they threw  
 And all the waves did strew  
 That like old Peneus waters they did seem  
 When down along by pleasant Tempe's shore 79  
 Scattered with flowers through Thessaly they strewn  
 That they appear through lilies plenteous store  
 Like a bride's chamber floor  
 Two of those nymphs meanwhile two garlands  
 bound  
 Of freshest flowers which in that mead they found  
 The which presenting all in trim array 85  
 Their snowy foreheads there withal they crowned  
 Whilst one did sing this lay  
 Prepared against that day  
 Against their bridal day which was not long—  
 Sweet Thames! run softly till I end my song 90

Ye gentle birds! the world's fair ornament  
 And heaven's glory whom this happy hour  
 Doth lead unto your lover's blissful bower  
 Joy may you have and gentle hearts content  
 Of your love's complement 95  
 And let fair Venus that is queen of love  
 With her heart quelling soon upon you smile  
 Whose smile they say hath virtue to remove  
 All love's dislike and friendship's faulty guile  
 Forever to assail 100  
 Let endless peace your steadfast hearts accord  
 And blessed plenty wait upon your board  
 And let your bed with pleasures chaste abound  
 That fruitful issue may to you afford,  
 Which may your foes confound, 105  
 And make your joys redound  
 Upon your bridal day which is not long—  
 Sweet Thames! run softly till I end my song

So ended she and all the rest around  
 To her redoubled that her undersong 110  
 Which said their bridal day should not be long  
 And gentle Echo from the neighbor ground  
 Their accents did resound  
 So forth those joyous birds did pass along  
 Adown the Lee that to them murmured low 115  
 As he would speak but that he lacked a tongue  
 Yet did by signs his glad affection show  
 Making his stream run slow  
 And all the fowl which in his flood did dwell  
 Can flock about these twain that did excel 120  
 The rest so far as Cynthia doth shend  
 The lesser stars So they, enranged well  
 Did on those two attend,  
 And their best service lend 124  
 Against their wedding day, which was not long—  
 Sweet Thames! run softly, till I end my song

At length they all to merry London came  
 To merry London my most kindly nurse,  
 That to me gave this life's first native source

Though from another place I take my name 130  
 An house of ancient fame  
 There when they came whereas those buicky towels  
 The which on Thames broad, aged back do ride,  
 Where now the studious lawyers have their bowers  
 There whilom wont the Templar Knights to bide 135  
 Till they decayed through pride  
 Next whereunto there stands a stately place,  
 Where oft I gained gifts and goodly grace  
 Of that great lord which therein wont to dwell  
 Whose want too well now feels my friendless case  
 But ah! here fits not well 141  
 Old woes but joys, to tell  
 Against the bridal day which is not long—  
 Sweet Thames! run softly till I end my song

Yet therein now doth lodge a noble peer 145  
 Great England's glory, and the world's wide wonder  
 Whose dreadful name late through all Spain did  
 thunder  
 And Hercules two pillars standing near  
 Did make to quake and fear  
 Fair branch of honour flower of chivalry! 150  
 That fillest England with thy triumph's fame  
 Joy have thou of thy noble victory  
 And endless happiness of thine own name  
 That promiseth the same  
 That through thy prowess and victorious arms, 155  
 Thy country may be freed from foreign harms  
 And great Eliza's glorious name may ring  
 Through all the world filled with thy wide alarms  
 Which some brave muse may sing  
 To ages following 160  
 Upon the bridal day which is not long—  
 Sweet Thames! run softly till I end my song

From those high towers this noble lord issuing  
 Like radiant Hesper when his golden hair  
 In the ocean billows he hath bathed fair 165  
 Descended to the river's open viewing  
 With a great train ensuing  
 Above the rest were goodly to be seen  
 Two gentle knights of lovely face and feature  
 Beseeming well the bower of any queen 170  
 With gifts of wit and ornaments of nature,  
 Fit for so goodly stature  
 That like the twins of Jove they seemed in sight  
 Which deck the baldrick of the heavens bright  
 They two forth pacing to the river's side 175  
 Received those two fair brides their love's delight  
 Which at the appointed tide,  
 Each one did make his bride  
 Against their bridal day which is not long—  
 Sweet Thames! run softly till I end my song 180

## The Marriage of True Minds

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
 Admit impediments Love is not love  
 Which alters when it alteration finds,  
 Or bends with the remover to remove  
 O no! it is an ever fixed mark,  
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken,  
 It is the star to every wandering bark,  
 Whose worth's unknown although his height be  
 taken

Love's not Time's fool though rosy lips and cheeks  
 Within his bending sickle's compass come 10  
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom —  
 If this be error and upon me proved  
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved

## The Ecstasy

JOHN DONNE

Where, like a pillow on a bed  
 A pregnant bank swelled up to rest  
 The violet's reclining head,  
 Sat we two, one another's best  
 Our hands were firmly cemented 5  
 With a fast balm which thence did spring  
 Our eye beams twisted, and did thread  
 Our eyes upon one double sting  
 So to intergraft our hands as yet  
 Was all the means to make us one, 10  
 And pictures in our eyes to get  
 Was all our propagation  
 As twixt two equal armies Fate  
 Suspends uncertain victory  
 Our souls (which to advance their state 15  
 Were gone out) hung twixt her and me  
 And whilst our souls negotiate there,  
 We like sepulchral statues lay  
 All day the same our postures were  
 And we said nothing all the day 20  
 If any, so by love refined,  
 That he soul's language understood  
 And by good love were grown all mind  
 Within convenient distance stood  
 He (though he knew not which soul spake 25  
 Because both meant both spake the same)  
 Might thence a new concoction take,  
 And part far purer than he came

This Ecstasy doth unperplex  
 (We said) and tell us what we love  
 We see by this it was not sex  
 We see, we saw not what did move  
 But as all several souls contain  
 Mixture of things they know not what  
 Love these mixed souls doth mix again  
 And makes both one each this and that  
 A single violet transplant  
 The strength the colour and the size  
 (All which before was poor and scant)  
 Redoubles still and multiplies  
 When love with one another so  
 Interanimates two souls  
 That abler soul which thence doth flow  
 Defects of loneliness controls  
 We then who are this new soul know  
 Of what we are composed and made,  
 For the Atomes of which we grow  
 Are souls, whom no change can invade  
 But O alas so long so far  
 Our bodies why do we forbear?  
 They are ours though they are not we We are  
 The intelligences, they the spheres  
 We owe them thanks, because they thus  
 Did us to us at first convey  
 Yielded their forces sense to us  
 Nor are dross to us, but allay  
 On man heaven's influence works not so  
 But that it first imprints the air  
 So soul into the soul may flow  
 Though it to body first repair  
 As our blood labours to beget  
 Spirits as like souls as it can  
 Because such fingers need to knit  
 That subtle knot which makes us man  
 So must pure lovers souls descend  
 To affections and to faculties  
 Which sense may reach and apprehend  
 Else a great Prince in prison lies  
 To our bodies turn we then that so  
 Weak men on love revealed may look  
 Love's mysteries in souls do grow  
 But yet the body is his book  
 And if some lover such as we  
 Have heard this dialogue of one  
 Let him still mark us he shall see  
 Small change when we are to bodies gone

## On His Deceased Wife

JOHN MILTON

Methought I saw my late espoused Saint  
 Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,

Whom Jove's great Son to her glad Husband gave  
 Rescued from death by force though pale and faint,  
 Mine as whom washed from spot of child bed taint  
 Purification in the old Law did save,  
 And such as yet once more I trust to have  
 Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint  
 Came vested all in white pure as her mind  
 Her face was veiled, yet to my fancied sight  
 Love sweetness goodness in her person shined  
 So clear as in no face with more delight  
 But oh! as to embrace me she inclined  
 I waked she fled and day brought back my night

## The "Lucy" Poems

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

### *Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known*

Strange fits of passion have I known  
 And I will dare to tell  
 But in the Lover's ear alone  
 What once to me befell  
 When she I loved looked every day  
 Fresh as a rose in June  
 I to her cottage bent my way  
 Beneath an evening moon  
 Upon the moon I fixed my eye,  
 All over the wide lea,  
 With quickening pace my horse drew nigh  
 Those paths so dear to me  
 And now we reached the orchard plot  
 And as we climbed the hill  
 The sinking moon to Lucy's cot  
 Came near, and nearer still  
 In one of those sweet dreams I slept  
 Kind Nature's gentlest boon!  
 And all the while my eyes I kept  
 On the descending moon  
 My horse moved on hoof after hoof  
 He raised and never stopped  
 When down behind the cottage roof  
 At once, the bright moon dropped

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide  
 Into a Lover's head!  
 O mercy! to myself I cried  
 If Lucy should be dead!

*She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways*

She dwelt among the untrodden ways  
 Beside the springs of Dove  
 A Maid whom there were none to praise  
 And very few to love

A violet by a mossy stone  
 Half hidden from the eye!  
 Fair as a star when only one  
 Is shining in the sky

She lived unknown and few could know  
 When Lucy ceased to be  
 But she is in her grave and O!  
 The difference to me!

*I Traveled among Unknown Men*

I traveled among unknown men  
 In lands beyond the sea  
 Nor England! did I know till then  
 What love I bore to thee

'Tis past that melancholy dream!  
 Nor will I quit thy shore  
 A second time for still I seem  
 To love thee more and more

Among thy mountains did I feel  
 The joy of my desire  
 And she I cherished turned her wheel  
 Beside an English fire

Thy mornings showed thy nights concealed  
 The bowers where Lucy played  
 And thine too is the last green field  
 That Lucy's eyes surveyed

*Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower*

Three years she grew in sun and shower  
 Then Nature said 'A lovelier flower  
 On earth was never sown  
 This Child I to myself will take  
 She shall be mine, and I will make  
 A Lady of my own'

*A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal*

A slumber did my spirit seal,  
 I had no human fears

She seemed a thing that could not feel  
 The touch of earthly years

No motion has she now no force  
 She neither hears nor sees  
 Rolled round in earth's diurnal course  
 With rocks, and stones, and trees

*Dover Beach*

MATTHEW ARNOLD

The sea is calm to night  
 The tide is full the moon lies fair  
 Upon the straits—on the French coast the light  
 Gleams and is gone the cliffs of England stand  
 Glimmering and vast out in the tranquil bay

Come to the window sweet is the night air!  
 Only from the long line of spray  
 Where the sea meets the moon blanch'd sand  
 Listen! you hear the grating roar  
 Of pebbles which the waves draw back and fling  
 At their return up the high strand  
 Begin and cease, and then again begin,  
 With tremulous cadence slow and bring  
 The eternal note of sadness in

Sophocles long ago  
 Heard it on the Ægean and it brought  
 Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
 Of human misery we  
 Find also in the sound a thought  
 Hearing it by this distant northern sea

The sea of Faith  
 Was once too at the full, and round earth's shore  
 Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled  
 But now I only hear  
 Its melancholy long withdrawing roar  
 Retreating to the breath  
 Of the night wind down the vast edges dear  
 And naked shingles of the world

Ah love let us be true  
 To one another! for the world which seems  
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
 So various so beautiful so new  
 Hath really neither joy nor love nor light,  
 Nor certitude nor peace nor help for pain  
 And we are here as on a darkling plain  
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight  
 Where ignorant armies clash by night

# Dover Beach Revisited<sup>1</sup>

*Theodore Morrison*

Professor Morrison in this intelligent and ingenious essay approaches the problem of criticism of literature by presenting six attitudes towards the well known poem of Matthew Arnold entitled *Dover Beach*. In effect there are in this essay five different critical approaches and the general point of view which underlies Prampton's project in the first place.

One of the most difficult desires to satisfy is that for truth and rightness in literary judgment. Sprung as we are from a society which emphasizes science and objective verification we want desperately to possess the means of arriving at the true meaning of a poem as we arrive at the true meaning of a set of experiments in the laboratory. It is clear from this essay that students are not alone in this quest for ultimate verity. Professor Prampton determines to ascertain the meaning of *Dover Beach* on the obvious assumption that there is an objective meaning to be ascertained and that this meaning can best be determined by consensus of informed opinion.

It is noteworthy that each of the men whom Prampton consults approaches the poem from a series of *a priori* values which he has derived from sources outside the poem. The criticism of each of the men takes the form of the application of these preconceived principles to the particular poem and each of them succeeds admirably in finding adequate confirmation of his beliefs. Thus the Freudian, the Marxist, the textual are all given full and to the credit of Professor Morrison, eminently fair exposition.

The essential problem for the student however lies in his conclusions after reading the essay. The main question is to decide first if Prampton's scheme is in itself a reasonable and practicable one and this question can only be answered by considering the problem of meaning in a poetic work and deciding if in fact an objective meaning does exist. The next point to answer is whether any of the critics in the essay is right and to find reasons why he is right to the exclusion of the others. The possibility should also be considered that none of the critics is right which implies either that they are all wrong and that there is a right answer which has not been given or that they are all right and that there is no one answer to the problem of meaning.

The problem which Professor Morrison presents is fundamental to the question of literary criticism. It underscores the fact that attitudes towards literature change as the values and nature of culture change and that men tend to seek in literature confirmation of their beliefs or satisfaction of their desires at particular times in history. The essay also serves to emphasize that intangible quality of greatness which a poem like *Dover Beach* has, a quality which enables it to speak to all classes and

manner of men perhaps because in its universality it speaks to no one in particular.

You will find many examples of Prampton's attitude around you in the attempt to fix values scientifically—values which perhaps are eternal only because they can not so be fixed. Professor Morrison's essay is witty, humorous and gently satirical in tone but he has called attention to one of the most important principles of literature and indeed of all art.

## A NEW FABLE FOR CRITICS

EARLY in the year 1939 a certain Professor of Educational Psychology, occupying a well paid chair at a large endowed university, conceived a plot. From his desk in the imposing Hall of the Social Sciences where the Research Institute in Education was housed he had long burned with resentment against teachers of literature, especially against English departments. It seemed to him that the professors of English stood square across the path of his major professional ambition. His great desire in life was to introduce into the study the teaching the critical evaluation of literature, some of the systematic method, some of the objective procedure as he liked to call it, some of the certainty of result which he believed to be characteristic of the physical sciences. You make such a fetish of science, a colleague once said to him, why aren't you a chemist?—a question that annoyed him deeply.

If such a poem as Milton's *Lycidas* has a value—and most English teachers even to day would start with that as a cardinal fact—then that value must be measurable and expressible in terms that do not shift and change from moment to moment and person to person with every subjective whim. They would agree these teachers of literature, these professors of English, that the value of the poem is in some sense objective, they would never agree to undertake any objective procedure to determine what that value is. They would not clearly define what they meant by achievement in the study of literature, and they buddled and snorted when anyone else attempted to define it. He remembered what had happened when he had once been incautious enough to suggest to a professor of English in his own college that it might be possible to establish norms for the appreciation of Milton. The fellow had simply exploded into a peal of histrionic laughter and then had tried to wither him with an equally histrionic look of incredulity and disgust.

He would like to see what would happen if the teachers of English were forced or lured, by some scheme or other into a public exposure of their position. It would put them in the light of intel-

<sup>1</sup> From *Harper's Magazine*, February 1940. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers.

lectual charlatanism nothing less and suddenly Professor Chartly (for so he was nicknamed) began to see his way

It was a simple plan that popped into his head simple yet bold and practical It was a challenge that could not be refused A strategically placed friend in one of the large educational foundations could be counted on there would be money for clerical expenses for travel if need be He took his pipe from his pocket filled it and began to puff exultantly To morrow he must broach the scheme to one or two colleagues to night over cheese and beer, would not be too soon He reached for the telephone

The plan that he unfolded to his associates that evening aroused considerable skepticism at first but gradually they succumbed to his enthusiasm A number of well known professors of literature at representative colleges up and down the land would be asked to write a critical evaluation of a poem prominent enough to form part of the standard reading in all large English courses They would be asked to state the criteria on which they based their judgment When all the answers had been received the whole dossier would be sent to a moderator a trusted elder statesman of education known everywhere for his dignity liberality of intelligence and long experience He would be asked to make a preliminary examination of all the documents and to determine from the point of view of a teacher of literature whether they provided any basis for a common understanding The moderator would then forward all the documents to Professor Chartly who would make what in his own mind he was frank to call a more scientific analysis Then the jaws of the trap would be ready to spring

Once the conspirators had agreed on their plot their first difficulty came in the choice of a poem Suffice it to say that someone eventually hit on Arnold's Dover Beach and the suggestion withstood all attack Dover Beach was universally known almost universally praised it was remote enough so that contemporary jealousies and cults were not seriously involved, yet near enough not to call for any special expertness historical or linguistic as a prerequisite for judgment it was generally given credit for skill as a work of art yet it contained also in its author's own phrase a criticism of life

Rapidly in the days following the first meeting the representative teachers were chosen and invited to participate in the plan Professional courtesy seemed to require the inclusion of an Arnold expert But the one selected excused himself from producing a value judgment of Dover Beach on the ground that he was busy investigating a fresh clue to the identity of Marguerite He had evidence that the woman in question after the episode hinted at in the famous

poems had married her deceased sister's husband thus perhaps affecting Arnold's views on a social question about which he had said a good deal in his prose writings The expert pointed out that he had been given a half year's leave of absence and a research grant to pursue the shadow of Marguerite through Europe, wherever it might lead him If only war did not break out he hoped to complete this research and solve one of the vexing problems that had always confronted Arnold's biographers His energies would be too much engaged in this special investigation to deal justly with the more general questions raised by Professor Chartly's invitation But he asked to be kept informed, since the results of the experiment could not fail to be of interest to him

After a few hitches and delays from other quarters, the scheme was ripe The requests were mailed out and the Professor of Educational Psychology sat back in grim confidence to await the outcome

## II

It chanced that the first of the representative teachers who received and answered Professor Chartly's letter was thought of on his own campus as giving off a distinct though not unpleasant odor of the ivory tower He would have resented the imputation himself At forty five Bradley Dewing was handsome in a somewhat speciously virile style, graying at the temples but still well knit and active He prided himself on being able to beat most of his students at tennis once a year he would play the third or fourth man on the varsity and go down to creditable defeat with some elegiac phrases on the ravages of time He thought of himself as a man of the world it was well for his contentment which was seldom visibly ruffled that he never heard the class mimic reproducing at a fraternity house or beer parlor his manner of saying After all, gentlemen it is pure poetry that lasts We must never forget the staying power of pure art The class mimic never represents the whole of class opinion but he can usually make everyone within earshot laugh

Professor Dewing could remember clearly what his own teachers had said about Dover Beach in the days when he was a freshman in college himself phrases rounded with distant professorial unction faith and doubt in the Victorian era disturbing influence of Darwin on religious belief Browning the optimist, Tennyson coming up with firm faith after a long struggle in the waters of doubt, Matthew Arnold, prophet of skepticism How would Dover Beach stack up now as a poem? Pull Arnold down from the shelf and find out

Ah yes how the familiar phrases came back The

sea is calm the tide is full the cliffs of England stand  
And then the lines he particularly liked

Come to the window sweet is the night air!  
Only from the long line of spray  
Where the ebb meets the moon-blanch'd sand  
Listen! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back and fling  
At their return up the high strand  
Begin and cease and then again begin  
With tremulous cadence slow

Good poetry that! No one could mistake it. Onomatopoeia was a relatively cheap effect most of the time. Poe, for instance. And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain. Anyone could put a string of *ss* together and make them rustle. But these lines in *Dover Beach* were different. The onomatopoeia was involved in the whole scene and it in turn involved the whole rhythmical movement of the verse, not the mere noise made by the consonants or vowels as such. The pauses—only listen, draw back, fling, begin, cease—how they infused a subdued melancholy into the moonlit panorama at the same time that they gave it the utmost physical reality by suggesting the endless iteration of the waves! And then the phrase. With tremulous cadence slow, coming as yet one more touch, one fine excess, when it seemed that every phrase and pause the scene could bear had already been lavished on it, that was Miltonic, Virgilian.

But the rest of the poem?

The sea of Faith  
Was once too at the full and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled

Of course Arnold had evoked the whole scene only to bring before us this metaphor of faith in its ebb-tide. But that did not save the figure from tautness and from an even more fatal vagueness. Everything in second-rate poetry is compared to the sea: love is as deep, grief as salty, passion as turbulent. The sea may look like a bright girdle sometimes, though Professor Dewing did not think it particularly impressive to say so. And in what sense is *faith* a bright girdle? Is it the function of faith to embrace, to bind, to hold up a petticoat, or what? And what is the faith that Arnold has in mind? The poet evokes no precise concept of it. He throws us the simple, undifferentiated word, unites its loose emotional connotations with those of the sea, and leaves the whole matter there. And the concluding figure of *Dover Beach*.

we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight  
Where ignorant armies clash by night

Splendid in itself, this memorable image. But the sea had been forgotten now, the darkling plain had dis-

placed the figure from which the whole poem tacitly promised to evolve. It would not have been so if John Donne had been the craftsman. A single bold yet accurate analogy with constantly developing implications would have served him for the whole poem.

Thus mused Professor Dewing, the lines of his verdict taking shape in his head. A critic of poetry of course was not at liberty to pass judgment on a poet's thought; he could only judge whether, in treating of the thought or sensibility he had received from his age, the poet had produced a satisfactory work of art. Arnold, Professor Dewing felt, had not been able to escape from the didactic tone or from a certain commonness and vagueness of expression. With deep personal misgivings about his position in a world both socially and spiritually barbarous, he had sought an image for his emotion and had found it in the sea—a natural phenomenon still obscured by the drappings of conventional beauty and used by all manner of poets to express all manner of feelings.

*Dover Beach* would always remain notable. Professor Dewing decided, as an expression of Victorian sensibility. It contained lines of ever memorable poetic skill. But it could not, he felt, be accepted as a uniformly satisfactory example of poetic art.

### III

It was occasionally a source of wonder to those about him just why Professor Oliver Twitchell spent so much time and eloquence urging that man's lower nature must be repressed, his animal instincts kept in bounds by the exertion of the higher will. To the casual observer, Professor Twitchell himself did not seem to possess much animal nature. It seemed incredible that a desperate struggle with powerful bestial passions might be going on at any moment within his own slight frame, behind his delicate white face in which the most prominent feature was the octagonal glasses that focused his eyes on the outside world. Professor Twitchell was a good deal given to discipleship but not much to friendship. He had himself been a disciple of the great Irving Babbitt and he attracted a small number of disciples among his own more earnest students. But no one knew him well. Only one of his colleagues, who took a somewhat sardonic interest in the mysteries of human nature, possessed a possible clue to the origin of his efforts to repress man's lower nature and vindicate his higher. This colleague had wormed his way sufficiently into Oliver Twitchell's confidence to learn about his family, which he did not often mention. Professor Twitchell, it turned out, had come of decidedly unacademic stock. One of his brothers was the chief salesman for a company that made domestic fire alarm appliances. At a moment's



notice he would whip out a sample from his bag or pocket plug it into the newest electric outlet and while the bystanders waited in terrified suspense would explain that in the dead of night if the house caught fire the thing would go off with a whoop loud enough to win the soundest sleeper. Lined up with his whole string of brothers and sisters all older than he all abounding in spirits, Professor Twitchell looked like the runt of the litter. His colleague decided that he must have had a very hard childhood and that it was not his own animal nature that he needed so constantly to repress but his family's.

Whatever the reasons Professor Twitchell felt no reality in the teaching of literature except as he could extract from it definitions and illustrations of man's moral struggle in the world. For him recent history had been a history of intellectual confusion and degradation and hence of social confusion and degradation. Western thought had fallen into a heresy. It had failed to maintain the fundamental grounds of a true humanism. It had blurred the distinction between man, God, and nature. Under the influence of the sciences it had set up a monism in which the moral as well as the physical constitution of man was included within nature and the laws of nature. It had therefore exalted man as naturally good and exalted the free expression of all his impulses. What were the results of this heresy? An age complained Professor Twitchell bitterly in which young women talked about sexual perversions at the dinner table, an age in which everyone agreed that society was in dissolution and insisted on the privilege of being dissolute, an age without any common standards or value in morals or art, an age in short without discipline, without self-restraint in private life or public.

Oliver Twitchell when he received Professor Chartly's envelope sat down with a strong favorable predisposition toward his task. He accepted wholeheartedly Arnold's attitude toward literature, the demand that poetry should be serious, that it should present us with a criticism of life, that it should be measured by standards not merely personal but in some sense *real*.

Dover Beach had become Arnold's best-known poem, admired as his masterpiece. It would surely contain therefore a distillation of his attitude. Professor Twitchell pulled down his copy of Arnold and began to read, and as he read he felt himself overtaken by surprised misgiving. The poem began well enough. The allusion to Sophocles, who had heard the sound of the retreating tide by the Ægean centuries ago, admirably prepared the groundwork of high seriousness for a poem which would culminate in a real criticism of human experience. But did the poem so culminate? It was true that the world

With really neither joy nor love nor light  
Nor certitude nor peace nor help for pain

if one meant the world as the worldling knows it, the man who conducts his life by unreflective natural impulse. Such a man will soon enough encounter the disappointments of ambition, the instability of all bonds and ties founded on nothing firmer than passion or self-interest. But this uncertainty of the world to a true disciple of culture should become a means of self-discipline. It should lead him to ask how life may be purified and ennobled, how we may by wisdom and self-restraint oppose to the accidents of the world a true human culture based on the exertion of a higher will. No call to such a positive moral will Professor Twitchell reluctantly discovered, can be heard in *Dover Beach*. Man is an ignorant soldier struggling confusedly in a blind battle. Was this the culminating truth that Arnold the poet had given men in his masterpiece? Professor Twitchell sadly revised his value judgment of the poem. He could not feel that in his most widely admired performance Arnold had seen life steadily or seen it whole, rather he had seen it only on its worldly side and seen it under an aspect of terror. *Dover Beach* would always be justly respected for its poetic art, but the famous lines on Sophocles better exemplified the poet as a critic of life.

#### IV

As a novelist still referred to in his late thirties as young and promising, Rudolph Mole found himself in a curious relation toward his academic colleagues. He wrote for the public, not for the learned journals; hence he was spared the necessity of becoming a pedant. At the same time the more lucrative fruits of pedantry were denied to him by his quiet exclusion from the guild. Younger men sweating for promotion, living in shabby genteel poverty on yearly appointments, their childless wives mimicking their academic shop-talk in bluestocking phrases, would look up from the stacks of five by three cards on which they were constantly accumulating notes and references, and would say to him: You don't realize how lucky you are, teaching composition. You aren't expected to know anything. Sometimes an older colleague who had passed through several stages of the mysteries of preferment would belittle professional scholarship to him with an elaborate show of graciousness and envy. We are all just pedants, he would say. You teach the students what they really want and need. Rudolph noticed that the self-confessed pedant went busily on publishing monographs and being promoted, while

he himself remained year by year the English Department's most eminent pool relation

He was not embittered. His dealings with students were pleasant and interesting. There was a sense of reality and purpose in trying to elicit from them a better expression of their thoughts, trying to increase their understanding of the literary crafts. He could attack their minds on any front he chose and he could follow his intellectual hobbies as freely as he liked without being confined to the artificial boundaries of a professional field of learning.

Freud, for example. When Professor Chertly and his accomplices decided that a teacher of creative writing should be included in their scheme and chose Rudolph Mole for the post, they happened to catch him at the height of his enthusiasm for Freud. Not that he expected to psychoanalyze authors through their works; that he avowed was not his purpose. You can't deduce the specific secrets of a man's life; he would cheerfully admit, by trying to fit his works into the textbook patterns of complexes and psychoses. The critic in any case is interested only in the man to the extent that he is involved in his work. But everyone agrees Rudolph maintained that the man is involved in his work. Some part of the psychic constitution of the author finds expression in every line that he writes. We can't understand the work unless we can understand the psychic traits that have gained expression in it. We may never be able to trace back these traits to their ultimate sources and causes, probably buried deep in the author's childhood. But we need to gain as much light on them as we can, since they appear in the work we are trying to apprehend and determine its character. This is what criticism has always sought to do. Freud simply brings new light to the old task.

Rudolph was fortunate enough at the outset to pick up at the college bookstore a copy of Mr. Lionel Trilling's recent study of Matthew Arnold. In this volume he found much of his work already done for him. A footnote to Mr. Trilling's text, citing evidence from Professors Tinker and Lowry, made it clear that *Dover Beach* may have been written in 1850, some seventeen years before it was first published. This for Rudolph's purposes was a priceless discovery. It meant that all the traditional talk about the poem was largely null and void. The poem was not a repercussion of the bombshell that Darwin dropped on the religious sensibilities of the Victorians. It was far more deeply personal and individual than that. Perhaps when Arnold published it his own sense of what it expressed or how it would be understood had changed. But clearly the poem came into being as an expression of what Arnold felt to be the particular kind of affection and passion he needed from a woman. It was a love poem and took its place with utmost naturalness, once the clue

had been given in the group of similar and related poems addressed to Marguerite. Mr. Trilling summed up in a fine sentence one strain in these poems and the principal strain in *Dover Beach* when he wrote that for Arnold fidelity is a word relevant only to those lovers who see the world as a place of sorrow and in their common suffering require the comfort of constancy.

Ah love let us be true  
To one another! for the world  
Hath really neither joy nor love nor light

The point was unmistakable. And from the whole group of poems to which *Dover Beach* belonged a sketch of Arnold as an erotic personality could be derived. The question whether a real Marguerite existed was an idle one for the traits that found expression in the poems were at least real enough to produce the poems and to determine their character.

And what an odd spectacle it made the self-expressed character of Arnold as a lover! The ordinary degree of aggressiveness, the normal joy of conquest and possession seemed to be wholly absent from him. The love he asked for was essentially a protective love, sisterly or motherly, in its unavoidable ingredient of passion he felt a constant danger which repelled and unsettled him. He addressed Marguerite as *My sister!* He avowed and deplored his own womanish fits of instability.

I too have wish'd no woman more  
This starting feverish heart away

He emphasized his nervous anguish and contrivance impulses. He was a teased and labour'd heart, an unloved, unloving Desire. He could not break through his fundamental isolation and submerge himself in another human soul and he believed that all men shared this plight.

Yes in the sea of life ensh'd  
With echoing straits between us thrown  
Dotting the shoreless watery wild  
We mortal millions live alone

He never without remorse allowed himself

To haunt the place where passions reign

yet it was clear that whether he had ever succeeded in giving himself up wholeheartedly to a passion he had wanted to. There could hardly be a more telltale phrase than *Once long'd for storms of love*.

In short much more illumination fell on *Dover Beach* from certain other verses of Arnold's than from Darwin and all his commentators.

Truth—what is truth? Two bleeding hearts  
Wounded by men by Fortune tried

Outwearied with their lonely parts,  
Vow to be it henceforth side by side

The world to them was stern and drear  
Their lot was but to weep and moan  
Ah let them keep their faith sincere  
For neither could subsist alone!

Here was the nub *Dover Beach* grew directly from and repeated the same emotion but no doubt generalized and enlarged this emotion, sweeping into one intense and far reaching conviction of insecurity not only Arnold's personal fortunes in love, but the social and religious faith of the world he lived in. That much could be said for the traditional interpretation.

Of course as Mr Tilling did not fail to mention, anguished love affairs, harassed by mysterious inner incompatibilities formed a well established literary convention. But the fundamental sense of insecurity in *Dover Beach* was too genuine too often repeated in other works to be written off altogether to that account. The same sense of insecurity the same need for some rock of protection cried out again and again not merely in Arnold's love poems but in his elegies, reflective pieces and fragments of epic as well. Whenever Arnold produced a genuine and striking burst of poetry with the stamp of true self-expression on it, he seemed always to be in the dumps. Everywhere dejection confusion weakness, contention of soul. No adequate cause could be found in the events of Arnold's life for such an acute sense of incertitude it must have been of psychic origin. Only in one line of effort this fundamental insecurity did not hamper sadden or depress him and that was in the free play of his intelligence as a critic of letters and society. Even there if it did not hamper his efforts it directed them. Arnold valiantly tried to erect a barrier of culture against the chaos and squalor of society against the contentiousness of men. What was this barrier but an elaborate protective device?

The origin of the psychic pattern that expressed itself in Arnold's poems could probably never be discovered. No doubt the influence that Arnold's father exercised over his emotions and his thinking even though Arnold rebelled to the extent at least of casting off his father's religious beliefs, was of great importance. But much more would have to be known to give a definite clue—more than ever could be known. Arnold was secure from any attempt to spy out the heart of his mystery. But if criticism could not discover the cause, it could assess the result and could do so (thought Rudolph Mole) with greater understanding by an attempt, with up to date psychological aid, to delve a little deeper into the essential traits that manifested themselves in that result.

v

In 1917 Reuben Hale, a young instructor in a Western college had lost his job and done time in the penitentiary for speaking against conscription and for organizing pacifist demonstrations. In the twenties he had lost two more academic posts for his sympathies with Soviet Russia and his inability to forget his Marxist principles while teaching literature. His contentious eager lovable exasperating temperament tried the patience of one college administration after another. As he advanced into middle age and his growing family suffered repeated upheavals, his friends began to fear that his robust quarrels with established order would leave him a penniless outcast at fifty. Then he was invited to take a flattering post at a girls college known for its liberality of views. The connection proved surprisingly durable, in fact it became Professor Hale's turn to be apprehensive. He began to be morally alarmed at his own security, to fear that the bourgeois system which he had attacked so valiantly had somehow outwitted him and betrayed him into allegiance. When the CIO made its initial drive and seemed to be carrying everything before it he did his best to unseat himself again by rushing joyfully to the nearest picket lines and getting himself photographed by an alert press. Even this expedient failed, and he reconciled himself not without wonder, to apparent academic permanence.

On winter afternoons his voice could be heard booming out through the closed door of his study to girls who came to consult him on all manner of subjects from the merits of Plekhanov as a Marxist critic to their own most personal dilemmas. They called him Ben, he called them Smith Jones and Robinson. He never relaxed his cheerful bombardment of the milieu into which they were born and of the larger social structure which made bourgeois wealth bourgeois art morals and religion possible. But when a sophomore found herself pregnant it was to Professor Hale that she came for advice. Should she have an abortion or go through with it and heroically bear the social stigma? And it was Professor Hale who kept the affair from the Dean's office and the newspapers sought out the boy persuaded the young couple that they were desperately in love with each other and that pending the revolution a respectable marriage would be the most prudent course not to say the happiest.

James Joyce remarks of one of his characters that she dealt with moral problems as a cleaver deals with meat. Professor Hale's critical methods were comparably simple and direct. Literature like the other arts, is in form and substance a product of society and reflects the structure of society. The

structure of society is a class structure it is conditioned by the mode of production of goods and by the legal conventions of ownership and control by which the ruling class keeps itself in power and endows itself with the necessary freedom to exploit men and materials for profit. A healthy literature in a society so constituted can exist only if writers perceive the essential economic problem and ally themselves firmly with the working class.

Anyone could see the trouble with Arnold. His intelligence revealed to him the chaos that disrupted the society about him, the selfishness and brutality of the ruling class, the ugliness of the world which the industrial revolution had created, and which imperialism and liberalism were extending. Arnold was at his best in his critical satire of this world and of the ignorance of those who governed it. But his intelligence far outran his will, and his defect of will finally blinded his intelligence. He was too much a child of his class to disown it and fight his way to a workable remedy for social injustice. He caught a true vision of himself and of his times as standing between two worlds, one dead, one powerless to be born. But he had not courage or stomach enough to lend his own powers to the birth struggle. Had he thrown in his sympathies unreservedly with the working class, and labored for the inescapable revolution, *Dover Beach* would not have ended in pessimism and confusion. It would have ended in a cheerful, strenuous, and hopeful call to action. But Arnold could not divorce himself from the world of polite letters, of education, of culture into which he had been born. He did his best to purify them, to make them into an instrument for the reform of society. But instinctively he knew that culture, as he understood the term, was not a social force in the world around him. Instinctively he knew that what he loved was doomed to defeat. And so *Dover Beach* ended in a futile plea for protection against the hideousness of the darkling plain and the confused alarms of struggle and flight.

Professor Chartly's envelope brought Reuben Hale his best opportunity since the first CIO picket lines to vindicate his critical and social principles. He plunged into his answer with complete zest.

#### VI

When Peter Lee Prampton agreed to act as moderator in Professor Chartly's experiment, he congratulated himself that this would be his last great academic chore. He had enjoyed his career of scholarship and teaching, no man ever more keenly. But now it was drawing to an end. He was loaded with honors from two continents. The universities of Germany, France, and Britain had first laid their formative hands on his learning and cultivation, then given

their most coveted recognition to its fruits. But the honor and the glory seemed a little vague on the June morning when the expressman brought into his library the sizable package of papers which Professor Chartly had boxed and shipped to him. He had kept all his life a certain simplicity of heart. At seventy-four he could still tote a pack with an easy endurance that humiliated men of forty. Now he found himself giving in more and more completely to a lust for trout. Half a century of hastily snatched vacations in Cape Breton or the Scottish Highlands had never allowed him really to fill up that hollow craving to find a wild stream and fish it, which would sometimes rise in his throat even in the midst of a lecture.

Well, there would be time left before he died. And meanwhile here was this business of *Dover Beach*. Matthew Arnold during one of his American lecture tours had been entertained by neighbors of the Pramptons. Peter Lee Prampton's father had dined with the great man, and had repeated his conversation and imitated his accent at the family table. Peter himself, as a boy of nineteen or so, had gone to hear Arnold lecture. That he thought with a smile was probably a good deal more than could be said for any of these poor hacks who had taken Professor Chartly's bait.

At the thought of Arnold he could still hear the carriage wheels grate on the pebbly road as he had driven fifty odd years ago to the lecture in town, the prospective Mrs. Prampton beside him. His fishing rod lay under the seat. He chuckled out loud as he remembered how a pound-and-a-half trout had jumped in the pool under the clattering planks of a bridge, and how he had pulled up the horse, jumped out, and tried a cast while Miss Osgood sat scolding in the carriage and shivering in the autumn air. They had been just a little late reaching the lecture, but the trout, wrapped in damp leaves, lay safely beside the rod.

It was queer that *Dover Beach* had not come more recently into his mind. Now that he turned his thoughts in that direction, the poem was there in its entirety, waiting to be put on again like a coat that has been worn many times with pleasure and accidentally neglected for a while.

The sea of Faith was once too at the full

How those old Victorian battles had raged about the Prampton table when he was a boy! How the names of Arnold, Huxley, Darwin, Carlyle, Morris, Ruskin had been pelted back and forth by the excited disputants! Literature and Dogma, God and the Bible, Culture and Anarchy. The familiar titles brought an odd image into his mind: the tall figure of his father stretching up to turn on the gas lamps.

in the evening as the family sat down to dinner the terrific pop of the pilot light as it exploded into a net of white flame shaped like a little beehive the buzz and whine of a jet turned up too high

Ah love let us be true  
To one another! for the world which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams  
So various so beautiful so new  
Hath really neither joy nor love nor light  
Nor certitude nor peace nor help for pain

Peter Lee Prampton shivered in the warmth of his sunny library shivered with that flash of perception into the past which sometimes enables a man to see how all that has happened in his life for good or ill turned on the narrowest edge of chance. He lived again in the world of dreams that his own youth had spread before him a world truly various beautiful and new full of promise adventure and liberty of choice based on the opportunities which his father's wealth provided and holding out the prospect of a smooth advance into a distinguished career. Then within six months all lavish demonstration that the world has neither certitude nor peace nor help for pain his mother's death by cancer his father's financial overthrow and suicide the ruin of his own smooth hopes and the prospect instead of a long hampered, and obscure fight toward his perhaps impossible ambition. He lived again through the night hours when he had tramped out with himself the youthful question whether he could hold Miss Osgood to her promise in the face of such reversals. And he did not forget how she took his long-sleepless face between her hands kissed him and smiled away his anxiety with unsteady lips. Surely everyone discovers at some time or other that the world is not a place of certitude surely everyone cries out to some other human being for the fidelity which alone can make it so. What more could be asked of a poet than to take so profound and universal an experience and turn it into lines that could still speak long after he and his age were dead?

The best of it was that no one could miss the human feeling the cry from the heart in *Dover Beach*, it spoke so clearly and eloquently in a language everyone could understand in a form classically pure and simple. Or did it? Who could tell what any job lot of academicians might be trusted to see or fail to see? And this assortment in Chartly's package might be a queer kettle of fish! Peter Lee Prampton had lived through the Yellow Book days of Art for Art's sake he had read the muckrakers and watched the use of the Marxists and the Freudians. Could *Dover Beach* be condemned as unsympathetic with labor? Could a neurosis or a complex be discovered in it? His heart sank at the sharp sudden conviction that indeed

these and worse discoveries about the poem might be seriously advanced. Well he had always tried to go on the principle that every school of criticism should be free to exercise any sincere claim on men's interest and attention which it could win for itself. When he actually applied himself to the contents of Professor Chartly's bale he would be as charitable as he could as receptive to light from any quarter as he could bring himself to be.

But the task could wait. He felt the need of a period of adjustment before he could approach it with reasonable equanimity. And in the meanwhile he could indulge himself in some long needed editorial work on his dry fly book.



### *What Man Has Made of Man The Sorrows of Man's Estate*

We turn now to a new theme that of the sorrows of man's estate and here there is naturally no lack of materials. We note that however the grounds for the condemnation of man's inhumanity to man may vary they are at bottom but different aspects of the same protest they stem from the humanistic concept of what man can be as the ideal to be attained and they therefore reject what man has made of himself or what has been made of him. Best of all for mortals were it never to have been born nor to have seen the rays of the burning sun but if once born to pass as soon as may be the gates of Hades and to lie under a goodly heap of earth. Thus complained the Greek poet Theognis more than two millennia ago and his burden is echoed by Bacon.

What then remains but that we still should cry  
For being born or being born to die?

Behind Bacon's despair is the idea that man's fate is irrevocably predetermined and that he can face up to it only by yielding to it. Not so says Blake.

Man was made for joy and woe  
And when this we rightly know  
Thro' the world we safely go

The fault is in man and being in man can be expunged by man.

When gold and gems adorn the plough  
To peaceful arts shall Envy bow

Wordsworth sees a harmony between man and nature or rather he sees man harmoniously in nature man's inhumanity to man destroys that balance which can be restored only when man submits to the healing ministrations of nature. In Hood's poem we hear the first cries

of protest against the injustices of an industrial system which destroys the weak

Where the lamps quiver  
So far in the river  
With many a light  
From window and casement  
From gullet to basement  
She stood with amazement  
Houseless by night

Longfellow utters a prophetic cry of rage against the persecutions of a minority had he lived in our own times his poem could not have been more anguished in feeling Those who remember the picture of Whitman as a mile nurse tenderly healing the wounded soldiers in the Civil War will recall the compassion expressed in his face here is the same compassion in his poem The Wound Dresser

I thread my way through the hospitals  
The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand  
I sit by the restless all the dark night some are so young  
Some suffer so much I recall the experience sweet and sad  
(Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have crossed and rested  
Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips)

Man calls to man says Whitman but Arnold reminds us that We mortal millions live *alone* and this is indeed the cry of our own times for the greater the means of communication between us the less we are able to reach each other in understanding We are separated from each other by seas of suspicion fear and hate

## "In Vitam Humanum"

FRANCIS BACON

The World's a bubble and the Life of Man  
Less than a span  
In his conception wretched from the womb  
So to the tomb  
Curst from his cradle and brought up to years 5  
With cares and fears  
Who then to frail mortality shall trust  
But limns on water or but writes in dust  
Yet whilst with sorrow here we live oppressed  
What life is best? 10  
Courts are but only superficial schools  
To dandle fools  
The rural parts are turned into a den  
Of savage men  
And where's a city from foul vice so free 15  
But may be termed the worst of all the three?  
Domestic cares afflict the husband's bed  
Or pains his head

Those that live single take it for a curse  
Or do things worse 20  
Some would have children those that have them  
more  
Or wish them gone  
What is it then to have or have no wife  
But single thralldom or a double strife?  
Our own affections still at home to please 25  
Is a disease  
To cross the seas to any foreign soil  
Peril and toil  
Wars with their noise affright us when they cease  
We are wiser in peace — 30  
What then remains but that we still should cry  
For being born, or, being born, to die?

## Auguries of Innocence

WILLIAM BLAKE

To see a World in a grain of sand  
And a Heaven in a wild flower  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And Eternity in an hour  
A robin redbreast in a cage 5  
Puts all Heaven in a rage  
A dove house filled with doves and pigeons  
Shudders Hell through all its regions  
A dog starved at his master's gate  
Predicts the ruin of the State 10  
A horse misused upon the road  
Calls to Heaven for human blood  
Each outcry of the hunted hare  
A fibre from the brain does tear  
A skylark wounded in the wing 15  
A cherubim does cease to sing  
The game cock clapt and armed for fight  
Does the rising sun affright  
Eve's wolf's and lion's howl 20  
Raises from Hell a Human soul  
The wild deer wandering here and there  
Keeps the Human soul from care  
The lamb misused breeds public strife  
And yet forgives the butcher's knife  
The bat that flits at close of eve 25  
Has left the brain that won't believe  
The owl that calls upon the night  
Speaks the unbeliever's fright  
He who shall hurt the little wren  
Shall never be beloved by men 30  
He who the ox to wrath has moved  
Shall never be by woman loved  
The wanton boy that kills the fly  
Shall feel the spider's enmity  
He who torments the chafer's sprite 35

Weaves a bower in endless night  
 The caterpillar on the leaf  
 Repeats to thee thy mother's grief  
 Kill not the moth nor butterfly  
 For the Last Judgment driveth nigh  
 He who shall train the horse to war  
 Shall never pass the polar bar  
 The beggar's dog and widow's cat  
 Feed them, and thou wilt grow fat  
 The gnat that sings his summer's song  
 Poison gets from Slander's tongue  
 The poison of the snake and newt  
 Is the sweat of Envy's foot  
 The poison of the honey bee  
 Is the artist's jealousy  
 The prince's robes and beggar's rags  
 Are toadstools on the miser's bags  
 A truth that's told with bad intent  
 Beats all the lies you can invent  
 It is right it should be so  
 Man was made for joy and woe  
 And when this we rightly know  
 Thro' the world we safely go  
 Joy and woe are woven fine  
 A clothing for the soul divine  
 Under every grief and pine  
 Runs a joy with silken twine  
 The babe is more than swaddling bands  
 Throughout all these human lands  
 Tools were made and born were hands  
 Every farmer understands  
 Every tear from every eye  
 Becomes a babe in Eternity  
 This is caught by Females bright,  
 And returned to its own delight  
 The bleat the bark, bellow and roar  
 Are waves that beat on Heaven's shore  
 The babe that weeps the rod beneath  
 Writes revenge in realms of death  
 The beggar's rags fluttering in air  
 Does to rags the heavens' tear  
 The soldier armed with sword and gun  
 Palsied strikes the summer's sun  
 The poor man's farthing is worth more  
 Than all the gold on Africa's shore  
 One mite wrung from the labourer's hands  
 Shall buy and sell the miser's lands  
 Or if protected from on high  
 Does that whole nation sell and buy  
 He who mocks the infant's faith  
 Shall be mocked in Age and Death  
 He who shall teach the child to doubt  
 The rotting grave shall never get out  
 He who respects the infant's faith  
 Triumphs over Hell and Death  
 The child's toys and the old man's reasons  
 Are the fruits of the two seasons

The questioner, who sits so sly,  
 Shall never know how to reply  
 He who replies to words of Doubt  
 Doth put the light of knowledge out  
 The strongest poison ever known  
 Came from Caesar's laurel crown  
 Nought can deform the human race  
 Like to the armour's iron brace  
 When gold and gems adorn the plough  
 To peaceful arts shall Envy bow  
 A riddle or the cricket's cry  
 Is to Doubt a fit reply  
 The emmet's inch and eagle's mile  
 Make lame Philosophy to smile  
 He who doubts from what he sees  
 Will never believe do what you please  
 If the Sun and Moon should doubt  
 They'd immediately go out  
 To be in a passion you good may do  
 But no good if a passion is in you  
 The whore and gambler, by the state  
 Licensed, build that nation's fate  
 The harlot's cry from street to street  
 Shall weave Old England's winding sheet  
 The winner's shout the loser's curse  
 Dance before dead England's hearse  
 Every night and every morn  
 Some to misery are born  
 Every morn and every night  
 Some are born to sweet delight  
 Some are born to sweet delight  
 Some are born to endless night  
 We are led to believe a lie  
 When we see not thro' the eye  
 Which was born in a night, to perish in a night  
 When the Soul slept in beams of light  
 God appears, and God is Light  
 To those poor souls who dwell in Night  
 But does a Human Form display  
 To those who dwell in realms of Day

## Lines Written in Early Spring

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

I heard a thousand blended notes  
 While in a grove I sat reclined  
 In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts  
 Bring sad thoughts to the mind  
 To her fair works did Nature link  
 The human soul that through me ran  
 And much it grieved my heart to think  
 What man has made of man



Through primrose tufts in that green bower,  
 The periwinkle trailed its wreaths  
 And 'tis my faith that every flower  
 Enjoys the air it breathes 10

The birds around me hopped and played  
 Then thoughts I cannot measure —  
 But the least motion which they made 15  
 It seemed a thrill of pleasure

The budding twigs spread out their fan,  
 To catch the breezy air,  
 And I must think do all I can  
 That there was pleasure there 20

If this belief from heaven be sent,  
 If such be Nature's holy plan  
 Have I not reason to lament  
 What man has made of man?

## Observations Prefixed to "Lyrical Ballads"

*William Wordsworth*

Coleridge is without question the most important and most influential aesthetician of the English romantic movement and it is perhaps not too much to say that he stands in the same relation to modern criticism that Aristotle stood in relation to the criticism up to Coleridge himself. Unfortunately Coleridge did not produce a systematic and unified body of criticism with the result that there is still considerable uncertainty as to his final position on a number of crucial points. On the other hand Wordsworth who did not pretend to the role of critic in the Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads* did set down statements about the role of the poet and the mode of operation and function of poetry which while philosophically less well founded than Coleridge's insights do clearly explain what the romantic poets were trying to achieve and why. It will be seen that Wordsworth wrote with a program definitely in mind but one may very well ask—as one does about Poe's *Philosophy of Composition*—whether the impulse to write as he did came first and the critical justification only afterwards. Nevertheless Wordsworth's observations do draw a sharp line between the aims and methods of the neoclassical poets against whom the romantics revolted and the implications of this revolt have been far reaching still affecting the creation of literature today. In any event a reading of the Preface ought to put an end to the notion of the romantic poet

as a starchy eyed rebel giving undisciplined vent to his feelings and emotions

THE FIRST volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published as an experiment which I hoped might be of some use to ascertain how far by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted which a Poet may rationally endeavour to impart.

I had formed no very inaccurate estimate of the probable effect of those Poems. I flattered myself that they who should be pleased with them would read them with more than common pleasure and, on the other hand I was well aware that by those who should dislike them they would be read with more than common dislike. The result has differed from my expectation in this only that a greater number have been pleased than I ventured to hope I should please.

Several of my Friends are anxious for the success of these Poems from a belief that if the views with which they were composed were indeed realized a class of Poetry would be produced well adapted to interest mankind permanently and not unimportant in the quality and in the multiplicity of its moral relations and on this account they have advised me to prefix a systematic defence of the theory upon which the Poems were written. But I was unwilling to undertake the task knowing that on this occasion the Reader would look coldly upon my arguments since I might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish and foolish hope of *reasoning* him into an approbation of these particular Poems and I was still more unwilling to undertake the task because adequately to display the opinions and fully to enforce the arguments would require a space wholly disproportionate to a preface. For to treat the subject with the clearness and coherence of which it is susceptible it would be necessary to give a full account of the present state of the public taste in this country and to determine how far this taste is healthy or depraved which, again could not be determined without pointing out in what manner language and the human mind act and react on each other, and without retracing the revolutions not of literature alone but likewise of society itself. I have therefore altogether declined to enter regularly upon this defence yet I am sensible, that there would be something like impropriety in abruptly obtruding upon the Public, without a few words of introduction Poems so materially different from those upon which general approbation is at present bestowed.

It is supposed that by the act of writing in verse

an Author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association that he not only thus apprises the Reader that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book but that others will be carefully excluded. This exponent or symbol held forth by metrical language must in different eras of literature have excited very different expectations for example in the age of Catullus Terence and Lucretius and that of Statius or Claudian and in our own country in the age of Shakespeare and Beaumont and Fletcher and that of Donne and Cowley or Dryden or Pope I will not take upon me to determine the exact import of the promise which, by the act of writing in verse an Author in the present day makes to his reader but it will undoubtedly appear to many persons that I have not fulfilled the terms of an engagement thus voluntarily contracted. They who have been accustomed to the gaudiness and mane phraseology of many modern writers if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion will, no doubt frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title. I hope therefore the reader will not censure me for attempting to state what I have proposed to myself to perform and also (as far as the limits of a preface will permit) to explain some of the chief reasons which have determined me in the choice of my purpose that at least he may be spared any unpleasant feeling of disappointment and that I myself may be protected from one of the most dishonourable accusations which can be brought against an Author namely, that of an indolence which prevents him from endeavouring to ascertain what is his duty, or when his duty is ascertained prevents him from performing it.

The principal object then proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life and to relate or describe them throughout as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men and at the same time to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect and further and above all to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them truly though not ostentatiously the primary laws of our nature chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity are less under restraint and speak a plainer and more emphatic language because in that condition of life our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater simplic-

ity and consequently may be more accurately contemplated and more forcibly communicated because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings and from the necessary character of rural occupations are more easily comprehended and are more durable and lastly because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. The language too of these men has been adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived and because from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly such a language arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art, in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression in order to furnish food for fickle tastes and fickle appetites of their own creation.<sup>1</sup>

I cannot however be insensible to the present outcry against the triviality and meanness both of thought and language which some of my contemporaries have occasionally introduced into their metrical compositions and I acknowledge that this defect where it exists is more dishonourable to the Writers own character than false refinement or arbitrary innovation though I should contend at the same time that it is far less pernicious in the sum of its consequences. From such verses the Poems in these volumes will be found distinguished at least by one mark of difference that each of them has a worthy *purpose*. Not that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formerly conceived but habits of meditation have I trust so prompted and regulated my feelings that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings will be found to carry along with them a *purpose*. If this opinion be erroneous I can have little right to the name of a Poet. For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are

<sup>1</sup> It is worth while here to observe that the affecting parts of Chaucer are almost always expressed in language pure and universally intelligible even to this day.

modified and directed by our thoughts which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other we discover what is really important to men so by the repetition and continuance of this act our feelings will be connected with important subjects till at length if we be originally possessed of much sensibility such habits of mind will be produced that by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits we shall describe objects and utter sentiments of such a nature and in such connexion with each other that the understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened and his affections strengthened and purified

It has been said that each of these poems has a purpose Another circumstance must be mentioned which distinguishes these Poems from the popular Poetry of the day it is this, that the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation and not the action and situation to the feeling

A sense of false modesty shall not prevent me from asserting that the Reader's attention is pointed to this mark of distinction far less for the sake of these particular Poems than from the general importance of the subject The subject is indeed important! For the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this and who does not further know that one being is elevated above another, in proportion as he possesses this capability It has therefore appeared to me that to endeavour to produce or enlarge this capability is one of the best services in which at any period a Writer can be engaged but this service excellent at all times is especially so at the present day For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place and the increasing accumulation of men in cities where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies To this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves The invaluable works of our elder writers I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse —When I think upon this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation, I am almost ashamed to have spoken of the

feeble endeavour made in these volumes to counteract it and reflecting upon the magnitude of the general evil I should be oppressed with no dishonourable melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it which are equally inherent and indestructible and were there not added to this impression a belief that the time is approaching when the evil will be systematically opposed by men of greater powers, and with far more distinguished success

Having dwelt thus long on the subjects and aim of these Poems I shall request the Reader's permission to apprise him of a few circumstances relating to their *style* in order among other reasons that he may not censure me for not having performed what I never attempted The Reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes and are utterly rejected as an ordinary device to elevate the style and raise it above prose My purpose was to imitate and, as far as possible to adopt the very language of men and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language They are indeed a figure of speech occasionally prompted by passion and I have made use of them as such but have endeavoured utterly to reject them as a mechanical device of style or as a family language which Writers in metre seem to lay claim to by prescription I have wished to keep the Reader in the company of flesh and blood persuaded that by so doing I shall interest him Others who pursue a different track will interest him likewise, I do not interfere with their claim but wish to prefer a claim of my own There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction as much pains has been taken to avoid it as is ordinarily taken to produce it, this has been done for the reason already alleged to bring my language near to the language of men, and further because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of poetry Without being culpably particular I do not know how to give my Reader a more exact notion of the style in which it was my wish and intention to write than by informing him that I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject consequently, there is I hope in these Poems little falsehood of description and my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance Something must have been gained by this practice, as it is friendly to one property of all good poetry, namely good sense but it has necessarily cut me off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inher-

instance of Poets I have also thought it expedient to restrict myself still further, having abstained from the use of many expressions in themselves proper and beautiful but which have been foolishly repeated by bad Poets till such feelings of disgust are connected with them as it is scarcely possible by any art of association to overpower

If in a poem there should be found a series of lines, or even a single line in which the language though naturally arranged, and according to the strict laws of metre, does not differ from that of prose there is a numerous class of critics, who when they stumble upon these prosaisms, as they call them imagine that they have made a notable discovery and exult over the Poet as over a man ignorant of his own profession. Now these men would establish a canon of criticism which the Reader will conclude he must utterly reject, if he wishes to be pleased with these volumes. And it would be a most easy task to prove to him that not only the language of a large portion of every good poem even of the most elevated character, must necessarily except with reference to the metre in no respect differ from that of good prose but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose when prose is well written. The truth of this assertion might be demonstrated by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical writings even of Milton himself. To illustrate the subject in a general manner I will here adduce a short composition of Gray who was at the head of those who, by their reasonings, have attempted to widen the space of separation betwixt Prose and Metrical composition and was more than any other man curiously elaborate in the structure of his own poetic diction

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine  
And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire  
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,  
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire  
These ears alas! for other notes repune  
*A different object do these eyes require*  
*My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine*  
*And in my breast the imperfect joys expire*  
Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer  
And new born pleasure brings to happier men  
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear  
To warm their little loves the birds complain  
*I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear*  
*And weep the more because I weep in vain*

It will easily be perceived, that the only part of this Sonnet which is of any value is the lines printed in Italics it is equally obvious that, except in the rhyme, and in the use of the single word *fruitless* for *fruitlessly*, which is so far a defect, the language

of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose

By the foregoing quotation it has been shown that language of Prose may yet be well adapted to Poetry and it was previously asserted that a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good Prose. We will go further. It may be safely affirmed that there neither is, nor can be any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between Poetry and Painting, and accordingly we call them Sisters but where shall we find bonds of connexion sufficiently strict to typify the affinity betwixt metrical and prose composition? They both speak by and to the same organs, the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance their affections are kindred and almost identical not necessarily differing even in degree, Poetry<sup>2</sup> sheds no tears such as Angels weep but natural and human tears she can boast of no celestial ichor that distinguishes her vital juices from those of prose the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both

If it be affirmed that rhyme and metrical arrangement of themselves constitute a distinction which overturns what has just been said on the strict affinity of metrical language with that of prose and paves the way for other artificial distinctions which the mind voluntarily admits I answer that the language of such Poetry as is here recommended is as far as possible a selection of the language really spoken by men that this selection wherever it is made with true taste and feeling, will of itself form a distinction far greater than would at first be imagined and will entirely separate the composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life and if metre be superadded thereto I believe that a dissimilitude will be produced altogether sufficient for the gratification of a rational mind. What other distinction would we have? Whence is it to come? And where is it to exist? Not surely where the Poet speaks through the mouths of his characters it can not be necessary here either for elevation of style, or any of its supposed ornaments for, if the Poet's subject be judiciously chosen it will naturally and upon fit occasion, lead him to passions the language of which, if selected truly and judiciously must necessarily be dignified and variegated, and

<sup>2</sup> I here use the word Poetry (though against my own judgment) as opposed to the word Prose and synonymous with metrical composition. But much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of Fact or Science. The only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre nor is this in truth a *strict* antithesis because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them even were it desirable

alive with metaphors and figures I forbear to speak of an incongruity which would shock the intelligent Reader should the Poet interweave any foreign splendour of his own with that which the passion naturally suggests it is sufficient to say that such addition is unnecessary And surely it is more probable that those passages which with propriety abound with metaphors and figures will have then due effect, if upon other occasions where the passions are of a milder character the style also be subdued and temperate

But, as the pleasure which I hope to give by the Poems now presented to the Reader must depend entirely on just notions upon this subject and as it is in itself of high importance to our taste and moral feelings I cannot content myself with these detached remarks And if in what I am about to say, it shall appear to some that my labour is unnecessary and that I am like a man fighting a battle without enemies such persons may be reminded, that whatever be the language outwardly holden by men, a practical faith in the opinions which I am wishing to establish is almost unknown If my conclusions are admitted, and carried as far as they must be carried if admitted at all our judgements concerning the works of the greatest Poets both ancient and modern will be far different from what they are at present both when we praise and when we censure and our moral feelings influencing and influenced by these judgements will I believe be corrected and purified

Taking up the subject then upon general grounds let me ask what is meant by the word Poet? What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him?—He is a man speaking to men a man, it is true endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind a man pleased with his own passions and volitions and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present an ability of conjuring up in himself passions which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely other men are accustomed to feel in themselves—whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater

readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels and especially those thoughts and feelings which by his own choice or from the structure of his own mind arise in him without immediate external excitement

But whatever portion of this faculty we may suppose even the greatest Poet to possess there cannot be a doubt that the language which it will suggest to him must often in liveliness and truth fall short of that which is uttered by men in real life under the actual pressure of those passions certain shadows of which the Poet thus produces or feels to be produced in himself

However exalted a notion we would wish to cherish of the character of a Poet it is obvious that while he describes and imitates passions his employment is in some degree mechanical compared with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering So that it will be the wish of the Poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes nay for short spaces of time perhaps to let himself slip into an entire delusion and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs modifying only the language which is thus suggested to him by a consideration that he describes for a particular purpose that of giving pleasure Here then, he will apply the principle of selection which has been already insisted upon He will depend upon this for removing what would otherwise be painful or disgusting in the passion he will feel that there is no necessity to trick out or to elevate nature and the more industriously he applies this principle the deeper will be his faith that no words which his fancy or imagination can suggest, will be to be compared with those which are the emanations of reality and truth

But it may be said by those who do not object to the general spirit of these remarks that as it is impossible for the Poet to produce upon all occasions language as exquisitely fitted for the passion as that which the real passion itself suggests it is proper that he should consider himself as in the situation of a translator who does not scruple to substitute excellencies of another kind for those which are unattainable by him, and endeavours occasionally to surpass his original in order to make some amends for the general inferiority to which he feels that he must submit But this would be to encourage idleness and unmanly despair Further it is the language of men who speak of what they do not understand who talk of Poetry as of a matter of amusement and idle pleasure, who will converse with us as gravely about a *taste* for Poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for rope dancing or Frontinac or Sherry Aristotle I have been told has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of

all writing it is so its object is truth, not individual and local but general and operative not standing upon external testimony but carried alive into the heart by passion truth which is its own testimony which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal Poetry is the image of man and nature The obstacles which stand in the way of the fidelity of the Biographer and Historian and of their consequent utility are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by the Poet who comprehends the dignity of his art The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him not as a lawyer a physician a mariner an astronomer, or a natural philosopher but as a Man Except this one restriction there is no object standing between the Poet and the image of things between this, and the Biographer and Historian there are a thousand

Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the Poet's art It is far otherwise It is an acknowledgement of the beauty of the universe an acknowledgement the more sincere because not formal but indirect it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love further it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man to the grand elementary principle of pleasure by which he knows and feels and lives and moves We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure I would not be misunderstood but wherever we sympathize with pain it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle combinations with pleasure We have no knowledge that is no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular facts but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone The Man of science, the Chemist and Mathematician whatever difficulties and disgusts they may have had to struggle with know and feel this However painful may be the objects with which the Anatomist's knowledge is connected he feels that his knowledge is pleasure and where he has no pleasure he has no knowledge What then does the Poet? He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and reacting upon each other so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions intuitions and deductions which from habit acquire the quality of intuitions he considers him as looking upon this complex scene of ideas and sensations and finding everywhere objects that immediately excite in him

sympathies which from the necessities of his nature are accompanied by an overbalance of enjoyment

To this knowledge which all men carry about with them and to these sympathies in which with out any other discipline than that of our daily life we are fitted to take delight the Poet principally directs his attention He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature And thus the Poet prompted by his feeling of pleasure which accompanies him through the whole course of his studies converses with general nature with affections akin to those which through labour and length of time, the Man of science has roused up in himself by conversing with those particular parts of nature which are the objects of his studies The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of science is pleasure but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence our natural and unalienable inheritance the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings The Man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor he cherishes and loves it in his solitude the Poet singing a song in which all human beings join with him rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science Emphatically may it be said of the Poet as Shakespeare hath said of man, that he looks before and after He is the rock of defence for human nature an upholder and preserver carrying everywhere with him relationship and love In spite of difference of soil and climate of language and manners of laws and customs in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time The objects of the Poet's thoughts are everywhere though the eyes and senses of man are it is true his favourite guides yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man If the labours of Men of science should ever create any material revolution direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive the Poet will sleep then no more than at present he will be ready to follow the steps of the Man of science not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself The remotest discoveries of the



Chemist the Botanist or Mineralogist will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarized to men shall be ready to put on as it were a form of flesh and blood the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration and will welcome the Being thus produced as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man—It is not then to be supposed that any one who holds that sublime notion of Poetry which I have attempted to convey will break in upon the sanctity and truth of his pictures by transitory and accidental ornaments and endeavour to excite admiration of himself by arts the necessity of which must manifestly depend upon the assumed meanness of his subject.

What has been thus far said applies to Poetry in general but especially to those parts of composition where the Poet speaks through the mouths of his characters and upon this point it appears to authorize the conclusion that there are few persons of good sense who would not allow that the dramatic parts of composition are defective in proportion as they deviate from the real language of nature and are coloured by a diction of the Poet's own either peculiar to him as an individual Poet or belonging simply to Poets in general, to a body of men who from the circumstance of their compositions being in metre it is expected will employ a particular language.

It is not then in the dramatic parts of composition that we look for this distinction of language but still it may be proper and necessary where the Poet speaks to us in his own person and character. To this I answer by referring the Reader to the description before given of a Poet. Among the qualities there enumerated as principally conducing to form a Poet is implied nothing differing in kind from other men but only in degree. The sum of what was said is that the Poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner. But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men. And with what are they connected? Undoubtedly with our moral sentiments and animal sensations and with the causes which excite these with the operations of the elements and the appearances of the visible universe with storm and sun

shine with the revolutions of the seasons with cold and heat with loss of friends and kindred with injuries and resentments gratitude and hope with fear and sorrow. These and the like are the sensations and objects which the Poet describes as they are the sensations of other men and the objects which interest them. The Poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions. How then can his language differ in any material degree from that of all other men who feel vividly and see clearly? It might be *proved* that it is impossible. But supposing that this were not the case the Poet might then be allowed to use a peculiar language when expressing his feelings for his own gratification, or that of men like himself. But Poets do not write for Poets alone but for men. Unless therefore we are advocates for that admiration which subsists upon ignorance and that pleasure which arises from hearing what we do not understand the Poet must descend from this supposed height and in order to excite rational sympathy he must express himself as other men express themselves. To this it may be added that while he is only selecting from the real language of men or which amounts to the same thing composing accurately in the spirit of such selection he is treading upon safe ground and we know what we are to expect from him. Our feelings are the same with respect to metre for as it may be proper to remind the Reader the distinction of metre is regular and uniform and not like that which is produced by what is usually called POETIC DICTION arbitrary and subject to infinite caprices upon which no calculation whatever can be made. In the one case the Reader is utterly at the mercy of the Poet respecting what imagery or diction he may choose to connect with the passion whereas in the other the metre obeys certain laws to which the Poet and Reader both willingly submit because they are certain and because no interference is made by them with the passion but such as the concurring testimony of ages has shown to heighten and improve the pleasure which co-exists with it.

It will now be proper to answer an obvious question namely Why professing these opinions have I written in verse? To this in addition to such answer as is included in what has been already said, I reply in the first place. Because however I may have restricted myself there is still left open to me what confessedly constitutes the most valuable object of all writing whether in prose or verse the great and universal passions of men the most general and interesting of their occupations and the entire world of nature before me—to supply endless combinations of forms and imagery. Now supposing for a moment that whatever is interesting in these objects may be as vividly described in prose why



should I be condemned for attempting to superadd to such description the charm which by the consent of all nations is acknowledged to exist in metrical language? To this, by such as are yet unconvinced it may be answered that a very small part of the pleasure given by Poetry depends upon the metre, and that it is injudicious to write in metre unless it be accompanied with the other artificial distinctions of style with which metre is usually accompanied and that by such deviation more will be lost from the shock which will thereby be given to the Reader's associations than will be counterbalanced by any pleasure which he can derive from the general power of numbers. In answer to those who still contend for the necessity of accompanying metre with certain appropriate colours of style in order to the accomplishment of its appropriate end, and who also in my opinion, greatly underrate the power of metre in itself it might perhaps, as far as relates to these Volumes, have been almost sufficient to observe that poems are extant written upon more humble subjects and in a still more naked and simple style which have continued to give pleasure from generation to generation. Now if nakedness and simplicity be a defect the fact here mentioned affords a strong presumption that poems somewhat less naked and simple are capable of affording pleasure at the present day and what I wish *chiefly* to attempt at present, was to justify myself for having written under the impression of this belief.

But various causes might be pointed out why when the style is manly and the subject of some importance words metrically arranged will long continue to impart such a pleasure to mankind as he who proves the extent of that pleasure will be desirous to impart. The end of Poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure, but, by the supposition, excitement is an unusual and irregular state of the mind ideas and feelings do not in that state, succeed each other in accustomed order. If the words however, by which this excitement is produced be in themselves powerful or the images and feelings have an undue proportion of pain connected with them, there is some danger that the excitement may be carried beyond its proper bounds. Now the co-presence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed in various moods and in a less excited state cannot but have great efficacy in tempering and restraining the passion by an intertexture of ordinary feeling and of feeling not strictly and necessarily connected with the passion. This is unquestionably true and hence though the opinion will at first appear paradoxical from the tendency of metre to divest language, in a certain degree of its reality, and thus to throw a sort of half-consciousness of unsubstantial existence over the whole com-

position there can be little doubt but that more pathetic situations and sentiments, that is, those which have a greater proportion of pain connected with them may be endured in metrical composition especially in rhyme than in prose. The metre of the old ballads is very artless yet they contain many passages which would illustrate this opinion and I hope if the following Poems be attentively perused similar instances will be found in them. This opinion may be further illustrated by appealing to the Reader's own experience of the reluctance with which he comes to the re-perusal of the distressful parts of *Clarissa Harlowe* or *The Gamester* while Shakespeare's writings in the most pathetic scenes never act upon us as pathetic, beyond the bounds of pleasure—an effect which in a much greater degree than might at first be imagined is to be ascribed to small but continual and regular impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical arrangement—On the other hand (what it must be allowed will much more frequently happen) if the Poet's words should be incommensurate with the passion and inadequate to raise the Reader to a height of desirable excitement then (unless the Poet's choice of his metre has been grossly injudicious) in the feelings of pleasure which the Reader has been accustomed to connect with metre in general and in the feeling whether cheerful or melancholy which he has been accustomed to connect with that particular movement of metre there will be found something which will greatly contribute to impart passion to the words and to effect the complex end which the Poet proposes to himself.

If I had undertaken a SYSTEMATIC defence of the theory here maintained it would have been my duty to develop the various causes upon which the pleasure received from metrical language depends. Among the chief of these causes is to be reckoned a principle which must be well known to those who have made any of the Arts the object of accurate reflection namely, the pleasure which the mind derives from the perception of similitude in dissimilitude. This principle is the great spring of the activity of our minds and their chief feeder. From this principle the direction of the sexual appetite and all the passions connected with it take their origin it is the life of our ordinary conversation and upon the accuracy with which similitude in dissimilitude and dissimilitude in similitude are perceived, depend our taste and our moral feelings. It would not be a useless employment to apply this principle to the consideration of metre and to show that metre is hence enabled to afford much pleasure and to point out in what manner that pleasure is produced. But my limits will not permit me to enter upon this subject and I must content myself with a general summary.

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation is gradually produced and does itself actually exist in the mind In this mood successful composition generally begins and in a mood similar to this it is carried on but the emotion, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, from various causes is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described the mind will upon the whole be in a state of enjoyment If Nature be thus cautious to preserve in a state of enjoyment a being so employed the Poet ought to profit by the lesson held forth to him and ought especially to take care, that whatever passions he communicates to his Reader, those passions if his Reader's mind be sound and vigorous should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure Now the music of harmonious metrical language the sense of difficulty overcome and the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rhyme or metre of the same or similar construction an indistinct perception perpetually renewed of language closely resembling that of real life, and yet in the circumstance of metre differing from it so widely—all these imperceptibly make up a complex feeling of delight which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling always found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions This effect is always produced in pathetic and impassioned poetry while in lighter compositions, the ease and gracefulness with which the Poet manages his numbers are themselves confessedly a principal source of the gratification of the Reader All that it is *necessary* to say however upon this subject, may be effected by affirming, what few persons will deny, that, of two descriptions, either of passions, manners or characters each of them equally well executed the one in prose and the other in verse, the verse will be read a hundred times where the prose is read once

Having thus explained a few of my reasons for writing in verse and why I have chosen subjects from common life, and endeavoured to bring my language near to the real language of men, if I have been too minute in pleading my own cause, I have at the same time been treating a subject of general interest and for this reason a few words shall be added with reference solely to these particular poems, and to some defects which will probably be found in them I am sensible that my associations must have sometimes been particular instead of general, and that, consequently, giving to things a

false importance I may have sometimes written upon unworthy subjects, but I am less apprehensive on this account than that my language may frequently have suffered from those arbitrary connexions of feelings and ideas with particular words and phrases, from which no man can altogether protect himself Hence I have no doubt that in some instances feelings, even of the ludicrous may be given to my Readers by expressions which appeared to me tender and pathetic Such faulty expressions were I convinced they were faulty at present and that they must necessarily continue to be so I would willingly take all reasonable pains to correct But it is dangerous to make these alterations on the simple authority of a few individuals or even of certain classes of men, for where the understanding of an Author is not convinced or his feelings altered this cannot be done without great injury to himself for his own feelings are his stay and support and if he set them aside in one instance he may be induced to repeat this act till his mind shall lose all confidence in itself and become utterly debilitated To this it may be added that the critic ought never to forget that he is himself exposed to the same errors as the Poet, and perhaps in a much greater degree for there can be no presumption in saying of most readers that it is not probable they will be so well acquainted with the various stages of meaning through which words have passed or with the fickleness or stability of the relations of particular ideas to each other and above all since they are so much less interested in the subject, they may decide lightly and carelessly

Long as the Reader has been detained I hope he will permit me to caution him against a mode of false criticism which has been applied to Poetry, in which the language closely resembles that of life and nature Such verses have been triumphed over in parodies of which Dr Johnson's stanza is a fair specimen —

I put my hat upon my head  
And walked into the Strand  
And there I met another man  
Whose hat was in his hand

Immediately under these lines let us place one of the most justly admired stanzas of the *Babes in the Wood*

These pretty Babes with hand in hand  
Went wandering up and down  
But never more they saw the Man  
Approaching from the Town

In both these stanzas the words, and the order of the words in no respect differ from the most unpassioned conversation There are words in both for example the *Strand* and the *Town* connected

with none but the most familiar ideas yet the one stanza we admit as admirable and the other as a fair example of the superlatively contemptible. Whence arises this difference? Not from the metre not from the language not from the order of the words, but the *matter* expressed in Dr Johnson's stanza is contemptible. The proper method of treating trivial and simple verses, to which Dr Johnson's stanza would be a fair parallelism is not to say this is a bad kind of poetry or this is not poetry but this wants sense it is neither interesting in itself nor can *lead* to anything interesting the images neither originate in that sane state of feeling which arises out of thought nor can excite thought or feeling in the Reader. This is the only sensible manner of dealing with such verses. Why trouble yourself about the species till you have previously decided upon the genus? Why take pains to prove that an ape is not a Newton when it is self-evident that he is not a man?

One request I must make of my reader which is that in judging these Poems he would decide by his own feelings genuinely, and not by reflection upon what will probably be the judgement of others. How common is it to hear a person say I myself do not object to this style of composition or this or that expression, but to such and such classes of people it will appear mean or ludicrous! This mode of criticism, so destructive of all sound unadulterated judgement is almost universal let the Reader then abide independently by his own feelings, and if he finds himself affected, let him not suffer such conjectures to interfere with his pleasure.

If an Author, by any single composition, has impressed us with respect for his talents it is useful to consider this as affording a presumption, that on other occasions where we have been displeased he nevertheless may not have written ill or absurdly and further to give him so much credit for this one composition as may induce us to review what has displeased us, with more care than we should otherwise have bestowed upon it. This is not only an act of justice but in our decisions upon poetry especially may conduce, in a high degree, to the improvement of our own taste, for an *accurate* taste in poetry and in all the other arts, as Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, is an *acquired* talent, which can only be produced by thought and a long continued intercourse with the best models of composition. This is mentioned, not with so ridiculous a purpose as to prevent the most inexperienced Reader from judging for himself (I have already said that I wish him to judge for himself), but merely to temper the rashness of decision, and to suggest, that if Poetry be a subject on which much time has not been bestowed the judgement may be erroneous, and that, in many cases, it necessarily will be so.

Nothing would, I know, have so effectually contributed to further the end which I have in view, as to have shown of what kind the pleasure is, and how that pleasure is produced which is confessedly produced by metrical composition essentially different from that which I have here endeavoured to recommend for the Reader will say that he has been pleased by such composition and what more can be done for him? The power of any art is limited and he will suspect, that if it be proposed to furnish him with new friends, that can be only upon condition of his abandoning his old friends. Besides as I have said, the Reader is himself conscious of the pleasure which he has received from such composition composition to which he has peculiarly attached the endearing name of Poetry, and all men feel an habitual gratitude and something of an honourable bigotry for the objects which have long continued to please them we not only wish to be pleased but to be pleased in that particular way in which we have been accustomed to be pleased. There is in these feelings enough to resist a host of arguments and I should be the less able to combat them successfully as I am willing to allow that in order entirely to enjoy the Poetry which I am recommending it would be necessary to give up much of what is ordinarily enjoyed. But would my limits have permitted me to point out how this pleasure is produced many obstacles might have been removed and the Reader assisted in perceiving that the powers of language are not so limited as he may suppose and that it is possible for poetry to give other enjoyments of a purer, more lasting, and more exquisite nature. This part of the subject has not been altogether neglected, but it has not been so much my present aim to prove, that the interest excited by some other kinds of poetry is less vivid and less worthy of the nobler powers of the mind as to offer reasons for presuming, that if my purpose were fulfilled a species of poetry would be produced which is genuine poetry, in its nature well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and likewise important in the multiplicity and quality of its moral relations.

From what has been said, and from a perusal of the Poems the Reader will be able clearly to perceive the object which I had in view he will determine how far it has been attained, and, what is a much more important question whether it be worth attaining and upon the decision of these two questions will rest my claim to the approbation of the Public.

#### APPENDIX TO 'LYRICAL BALLADS'

Perhaps as I have no right to expect that attentive perusal, without which, confined, as I have been,

to the narrow limits of a preface my meaning can not be thoroughly understood I am anxious to give an exact notion of the sense in which the phrase poetic diction has been used and for this purpose a few words shall here be added concerning the origin and characteristics of the phraseology which I have condemned under that name

The earliest poets of all nations generally wrote from passion excited by real events they wrote naturally and as men feeling powerfully as they did then language was daring and figurative In succeeding times Poets and Men ambitious of the fame of Poets perceiving the influence of such language and desirous of producing the same effect without being animated by the same passion set themselves to a mechanical adoption of these figures of speech and made use of them, sometimes with propriety but much more frequently applied them to feelings and thoughts with which they had no natural connexion whatsoever A language was thus insensibly produced differing materially from the real language of men in *any situation* The Reader or Hearer of this distorted language found himself in a perturbed and unusual state of mind when affected by the genuine language of passion he had been in a perturbed and unusual state of mind also in both cases he was willing that his common judgement and understanding should be laid asleep, and he had no instinctive and infallible perception of the true to make him reject the false, the one served as a passport for the other The emotion was in both cases delightful and no wonder if he confounded the one with the other and believed them both to be produced by the same, or similar causes Besides the Poet spake to him in the character of a man to be looked up to a man of genius and authority Thus, and from a variety of other causes this distorted language was received with admiration, and Poets it is probable, who had before contented themselves for the most part with misapplying only expressions which at first had been dictated by real passion carried the abuse still further and introduced phrases composed apparently in the spirit of the original figurative language of passion yet altogether of their own invention and characterized by various degrees of wanton deviation from good sense and nature

It is indeed true that the language of the earliest Poets was felt to differ materially from ordinary language because it was the language of extraordinary occasions but it was really spoken by men language which the Poet himself had uttered when he had been affected by the events which he described or which he had heard uttered by those around him To this language it is probable that metre of some sort or other was early superadded This separated the genuine language of Poetry still

further from common life so that whoever read or heard the poems of these earliest Poets felt himself moved in a way in which he had not been accustomed to be moved in real life and by causes manifestly different from those which acted upon him in real life This was the great temptation to all the corruptions which have followed under the protection of this feeling succeeding Poets constructed a phraseology which had one thing it is true, in common with the genuine language of poetry namely, that it was not heard in ordinary conversation that it was unusual But the first Poets as I have said spake a language which though unusual was still the language of men This circumstance however was disregarded by their successors, they found that they could please by easier means they became proud of modes of expression which they themselves had invented and which were uttered only by themselves In process of time metre became a symbol or promise of this unusual language, and whoever took upon him to write in metre, according as he possessed more or less of true poetic genius, introduced less or more of this adulterated phraseology into his compositions and the true and the false were inseparably interwoven until the taste of men becoming gradually perverted this language was received as a natural language and at length by the influence of books upon men did to a certain degree really become so Abuses of this kind were imported from one nation to another and with the progress of refinement this diction became daily more and more corrupt, thrusting out of sight the plain humanities of nature by a motley masquerade of ticks quaintnesses hieroglyphics and enigmas

It would not be uninteresting to point out the causes of the pleasure given by this extravagant and absurd diction It depends upon a great variety of causes but upon none perhaps more than its influence in impressing a notion of the peculiarity and exaltation of the Poet's character and in flattering the Reader's self-love by bringing him nearer to a sympathy with that character an effect which is accomplished by unsettling ordinary habits of thinking and thus assisting the Reader to approach to that perturbed and dizzy state of mind in which if he does not find himself he imagines that he is *balked* of a peculiar enjoyment which poetry can and ought to bestow

The sonnet quoted from Gray in the Preface except the lines printed in italics consists of little else but this diction though not of the worst kind and indeed if one may be permitted to say so it is far too common in the best writers both ancient and modern Perhaps in no way by positive example could more easily be given a notion of what I mean by the phrase *poetic diction* than by referring to a

comparison between the metrical paraphrase which we have of passages in the Old and New Testament and those passages as they exist in our common Translation See Pope's *Messiah* throughout Priors

Did sweeter sounds adorn my flowing tongue &c  
&c Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels &c &c, 1st Corinthians ch xiii Bv way of immediate example take the following of Dr Johnson

Turn on the prudent Ant thy heedless eyes  
Observe her labours Sluggard and be wise  
No stern command no monitory voice  
Prescribes her duties or directs her choice  
Yet timely provident she hastes away  
To snatch the blessings of a plenteous day  
When fruitful Summer loads the teeming plain  
She crops the harvest, and she stores the grain  
How long shall sloth usurp thy useless hours  
Unnerve thy vigour and enchain thy powers?  
While artful shades thy downy couch enclose  
And soft solicitation courts repose  
Amidst the drowsy charms of dull delight  
Year chases year with unremitted flight  
Till Want now following fraudulent and slow,  
Shall spring to seize thee like an ambush'd foe

From this hubbub of words pass to the original  
Go to the Ant, thou Sluggard consider her ways  
and be wise which having no guide, overseer or  
ruler provideth her meat in the summer, and  
gathereth her food in the harvest How long wilt  
thou sleep O Sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of  
thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber a little  
folding of the hands to sleep So shall thy poverty  
come as one that travelleth and thy want as an  
armed man Proverbs, ch vi

One more quotation and I have done It is from  
Cowper's Verses supposed to be written by Alexander Selkirk

Religion! what treasure untold  
Resides in that heavenly word!  
More precious than silver and gold  
Or all that this earth can afford  
But the sound of the church going bell  
These valleys and rocks never heard  
Ne'er sighed at the sound of a knell  
Or smiled when a sabbath appeared  
Ye winds that have made me your sport  
Convey to this desolate shore  
Some cordial endearing report  
Of a land I must visit no more  
My Friends do they now and then send  
A wish or a thought after me?

O tell me I yet have a friend  
Though a friend I am never to see

This passage is quoted as an instance of three different styles of composition The first four lines are poorly expressed some Critics would call the language prosaic the fact is it would be bad prose so bad that it is scarcely worse in metre The epithet church going applied to a bell and that by so chaste a writer as Cowper is an instance of the strange abuses which Poets have introduced into their language till they and their Readers take them as matters of course if they do not single them out expressly as objects of admiration The two lines

Ne'er sighed at the sound, &c are, in my opinion an instance of the language of passion wrested from its proper use, and, from the mere circumstance of the composition being in metre applied upon an occasion that does not justify such violent expressions and I should condemn the passage though perhaps few Readers will agree with me as vicious poetic diction The last stanza is throughout admirably expressed it would be equally good whether in prose or verse except that the Reader has an exquisite pleasure in seeing such natural language so naturally connected with metre The beauty of this stanza tempts me to conclude with a principle which ought never to be lost sight of and which has been my chief guide in all I have said—namely that in works of *imagination and sentiment* for of these only have I been treating in proportion as ideas and feelings are valuable whether the composition be in prose or in verse, they require and exact one and the same language Metre is but adventitious to composition and the phraseology for which that passport is necessary even where it may be graceful at all, will be little valued by the judicious

## STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 Against which poets represented here is Wordsworth reacting? What are his objections to the school of poetry they exemplify? How valid do these objections appear to you?
- 2 Does Wordsworth's practice as a poet appear to you to conform to his critical principles? Would failure to conform invalidate the poetry itself?
- 3 What is your opinion of Wordsworth's definition of poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquillity?
- 4 Would it seem to you that the other romantic poets are in agreement with Wordsworth?
- 5 Has poetry today followed Wordsworth's direction or has it gone along other paths?
- 6 How does Wordsworth's characterization of the nature of the poet and his place in society strike you? Are these applicable today?

# The Bridge of Sighs

THOMAS HOOD

One more Unfortunate,  
Weary of breath  
Rashly importunate,  
Gone to her death!

Take her up tenderly,  
Lift her with care  
Fashioned so slenderly,  
Young and so fair!

Look at her garments  
Clinging like cerements,  
Whilst the wave constantly  
Drips from her clothing  
Take her up instantly  
Loving, not loathing

Touch her not scornfully,  
Think of her mournfully,  
Gently and humanly  
Not of the stains of her,  
All that remains of her  
Now is pure womanly

Make no deep scrutiny  
Into her mutiny  
Rash and undutiful  
Past all dishonour,  
Death has left on her  
Only the beautiful

Still for all slips of hers  
One of Eve's family—  
Wipe those poor lips of hers  
Oozing so clammy

Loop up her tresses  
Escaped from the comb,  
Her fair auburn tresses  
Whilst wonderment guesses  
Where was her home?

Who was her father?  
Who was her mother?  
Had she a sister?  
Had she a brother?  
Or was there a dearer one  
Still, and a nearer one  
Yet, than all other?

Alas! for the rarity  
Of Christian charity  
Under the sun!

O it was pitiful!  
Near a whole city full  
Home she had none

Sisterly brotherly  
Fatherly motherly  
Feelings had changed  
Love by harsh evidence  
Thrown from its eminence  
Even God's providence  
Seeming estranged

Where the lamps quiver  
So far in the river  
With many a light  
From window and casement,  
From garret to basement,  
She stood, with amazement,  
Houseless by night

The bleak wind of March  
Made her tremble and shiver,  
But not the dark arch  
Or the black flowing river  
Mad from life's history,  
Glad to death's mystery,  
Swift to be hurled—  
Anywhere, anywhere  
Out of the world!

In she plunged boldly—  
No matter how coldly  
The rough river ran—  
Over the brink of it  
Picture it—think of it  
Dissolute Man!  
Lave in it, drink of it,  
Then if you can!

Take her up tenderly,  
Lift her with care  
Fashioned so slenderly,  
Young and so fair!

Ere her limbs frigidly  
Stiffen too rigidly,  
Decently kindly  
Smooth and compose them,  
And her eyes close them,  
Staring so blindly!

Dreadfully staring  
Through muddy impurity,  
As when with the daring  
Last look of despairing  
Fixed on futurity

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Perishing gloomily  
 Spurred by contumely  
 Cold inhumanity  
 Burning insanity  
 Into her rest —  
 Cross her hands humbly  
 As if playing dumbly,  
 Over her breast!

Owning her weakness  
 Her evil behaviour  
 And leaving with meekness  
 Her sins to her SAVIOUR!

## The Jewish Cemetery at Newport

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

How strange it seems! These Hebrews in their  
 graves

Close by the street of this fair seaport town,  
 Silent beside the never silent waves  
 At rest in all this moving up and down!

The trees are white with dust that o'er their sleep  
 Wave their broad curtains in the south wind's  
 breath

While underneath these leafy tents they keep  
 The long mysterious Exodus of Death

And these sepulchral stones so old and brown,  
 That pave with level flags their burial-place  
 Seem like the tablets of the Law thrown down  
 And broken by Moses at the mountain's base

The very names recorded here are strange  
 Of foreign accent and of different climes  
 Alvares and Rivera interchange  
 With Abraham and Jacob of old times

Blessed be God for he created Death!  
 The mourners said and Death is rest and peace,  
 Then added in the certainty of faith  
 And giveth Life that nevermore shall cease

Closed are the portals of their Synagogue,  
 No Psalms of David now the silence break,  
 No Rabbi reads the ancient Decalogue  
 In the grand dialect the Prophets spake

Gone are the living but the dead remain  
 And not neglected for a hand unseen  
 Scattering its bounty like a summer rain

95 Still keeps their graves and their remembrance  
 green

How came they here? What bust of Christian hate  
 What persecution merciless and blind  
 Drove o'er the sea—that desert desolate—  
 100 These Ishmaels and Hagar's of mankind?

They lived in narrow streets and lanes obscure  
 Ghetto and Judenstrass in milk and mire  
 Taught in the school of patience to endure  
 35 The life of anguish and the death of fire

All their lives long with the unleavened bread  
 And bitter herbs of exile and its fears  
 The wasting famine of the heart they fed  
 And slaked its thirst with marah of their tears

Anathema maranatha! was the cry  
 That rang from town to town from street to street  
 At every gate the accused Mordecai  
 Was mocked and jeered, and spurned by Christian  
 feet

Pride and humiliation hand in hand  
 45 Walked with them through the world where  
 they went  
 Trampled and beaten were they as the sand  
 And yet unshaken as the continent

For in the background figures vague and vast  
 Of patriarchs and of prophets whose sublime  
 And all the great traditions of the Past  
 50 They saw reflected in the coming time

And thus forever with reverted look  
 The mystic volume of the world they read  
 Spelling it backward like a Hebrew book  
 55 Till life became a Legend of the Dead

But ah! what once has been shall be no more!  
 The groaning earth in travail and in pain  
 Brings forth its races but does not restore  
 60 And the dead nations never rise again

## The Wound-Dresser

WALT WHITMAN

1

An old man bending I come among new faces  
 Years looking backward resuming in answer to  
 children  
 Come tell us old man, as from young men and  
 maidens that love me



(Arous'd and angry I'd thought to beat the alarm  
 and urge relentless war  
 But soon my fingers fail'd me my face droop'd and  
 I resign'd myself 5  
 To sit by the wounded and soothe them or silently  
 watch the dead )  
 Years hence of these scenes of these furious pas-  
 sions these chances  
 Of unsurpass'd heroes (was one side so brave? the  
 other was equally brave )  
 Now be witness again print the mightiest armies of  
 earth  
 Of those armies so rapid so wondrous what saw you  
 to tell us? 10  
 What stays with you latest and deepest? of curious  
 perils  
 Of hard-fought engagements or sieges tremendous  
 what deepest remains?

## 2

O maidens and young men I love and that love me  
 What you ask of my days those the strangest and  
 sudden your talking recalls  
 Soldier alert I arrive after a long march cover'd with  
 sweat and dust 15  
 In the nick of time I come plunge in the fight  
 loudly shout in the rush of successful charge  
 Enter the captiv'd works—yet lo like a swift run-  
 ning river they fade  
 Pass and are gone they fade—I dwell not on soldiers  
 perils or soldiers joys  
 (Both I remember well—many of the hardships few  
 the joys yet I was content )  
 But in silence in dreams projections 20  
 While the world of gun and appearance and myth  
 goes on  
 So soon what is over forgotten and waves wash the  
 imprints off the sand  
 With hinged knees returning I enter the doors  
 (while for you up there  
 Whoever you are follow without noise and be of  
 strong heart )  
 Bearing the bandages water and sponge 25  
 Straight and swift to my wounded I go  
 Where they lie on the ground after the battle  
 brought in  
 Where their priceless blood reddens the grass the  
 ground  
 Or to the rows of the hospital tent or under the  
 roof'd hospital  
 To the long rows of cots up and down each side I  
 return 30  
 To each and all one after another I draw near not  
 one do I miss  
 An attendant follows holding a tray he carries a  
 refuse pail,

Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and blood  
 emptied and fill'd again

I onward go I stop 4  
 With hinged knees and steady hand to dress wounds  
 I am firm with each the pricks are sharp yet un-  
 avoidable  
 One turns to me his appealing eyes—poor boy! I  
 never knew you  
 Yet I think I could not refuse this moment to die  
 for you, if that would save you

## 3

On on I go (open doors of time! open hospital  
 doors!)  
 The crush'd head I dress (poor crazed hand tear  
 not the bandage away ) 40  
 The neck of the civilly man with the bullet through  
 and through I examine  
 Hard the breathing rattles quite glazed already the  
 eye yet life struggles hard  
 (Come sweet death! be persuaded O beautiful  
 death!  
 In mercy come quickly )  
 From the stump of the arm the amputated hand 45  
 I undo the clotted lint remove the slough wash off  
 the matter and blood  
 Back on his pillow the soldier bends with curv'd  
 neck and side falling head  
 His eyes are closed his face is pale he dries not look  
 on the bloody stump  
 And has not yet look'd on it  
 I dress a wound in the side deep deep 50  
 But a day or two more for see the frame all wasted  
 and sinking  
 And the yellow blue countenance see  
 I dress the perforated shoulder the foot with the  
 bullet wound  
 Cleanse the one with a gnawing and putrid gan-  
 grene so sickening so offensive  
 While the attendant stands behind aside me holding  
 the tray and pail 55  
 I am faithful I do not give out,  
 The fractured thigh the knee the wound in the  
 abdomen  
 These and more I dress with impassive hand (yet  
 deep in my breast a fire a burning flame )

## 4

Thus in silence in dreams projections  
 Returning resuming I thread my way through the  
 hospitals, 60  
 The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand  
 I sit by the restless all the dark night some are so  
 young,

Some suffer so much I recall the experience sweet  
and sad  
(Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have  
cross'd and rested  
Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips )<sup>64</sup>

## To Marguerite

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,  
With echoing straits between us thrown,  
Dotting the shoreless watery wild  
We mortal millions live *alone*  
The islands feel the encircling flow,  
And then their endless bounds they know

But when the moon their hollows lights  
And they are swept by balms of spring  
And in their glens on starry nights  
The nightingales divinely sing  
And lovely notes from shore to shore  
Across the sounds and channels pour—

Oh! then a longing like despair  
Is to their farthest caverns sent  
For surely once they feel we were  
Parts of a single continent!  
Now round us spreads the watery plain—  
Oh might our margins meet again!

Who ordered, that their longings' fire  
Should be as soon as kindled cooled?  
Who renders vain their deep desire?  
A God! a God their severance ruled!  
And bade betwixt their shores to be  
The unplumbed, salt-estranging sea



## Swingers of Birches The Virtues of the Middle Way

He who is upright in his way of life and unstained by  
guilt needs not Moorish darts nor bow nor quivers loaded  
with poisoned arrows sang Horace with veiled irony  
but the stoic appeal has always held its own against the  
encroachments of man's inhumanity to man. The remedy  
for man's ills lies ready at hand it is within man's own  
heart for let each man want but little interfere with no

one else and the ills which afflict mankind will disappear  
of themselves Such a man Wotton tells us

is freed from servile bands  
Of hope to rise or fear to fall  
Lord of himself though not of lands  
And having nothing yet hath all

To cultivate one's own garden is by now a well worn  
phrase but in the hands of a poet as subtle as Marvell  
the phrase takes on endless overtones of meaning And  
Pope writes his epitaph

Thus let me live unseen unknown  
Thus unlamented let me die  
Steal from the world and not a stone  
Tell where I lie

Behind this poem lies Pope's philosophy of man to which  
he gave eloquent and elegant expression in the *Essay*  
on *Man* Man's greatest sin he holds is pride pride  
which sets him on to over reach himself and thus causes  
him to fall

The bliss of man (could price that blessing find)  
Is not to act or think beyond mankind  
No powers of body or of soul to share  
But what his Nature and his state can bear

For the universe is built to a grand design which if man  
cannot because of his limitations perceive in its entire  
plan is yet perfect in its idea and organization Man is  
part of a great chain of being which stretches from in-  
animate matter up to the heavens themselves and happi-  
ness comes when one occupies one's proper niche in the  
chain and fulfills his functions nor expects more nor does  
less

So man who here seems principal alone  
Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown  
Touches some wheel or verges to some goal  
Tis but a part we see and not a whole

Since then all are but parts of one stupendous whole  
whatever is is right and the proper study of mankind is  
man and thus will he learn to live on the isthmus of a  
middle state

In contrast we hear the homely and rasping voice with  
which Frost reads his poetry for

when I'm weary of considerations  
And life is too much like a pathless wood

then he remembers what a lonely boy had once learned  
from climbing birches up he went *toward* heaven but  
down to earth he came again That would be good both  
going and coming back for

Earth's the right place for love  
I don't know where it's likely to go better

## Character of a Happy Life

SIR HENRY WOTTON

How happy is he born and taught  
That serveth not another's will  
Whose armour is his honest thought  
And simple truth his utmost skill!

Whose passions not his masters are  
Whose soul is still prepared for death,  
Not tied unto the world with care  
Of public fame, or private breath

Who envies none that chance doth raise  
Or vice, Who never understood  
How deepest wounds are given by praise,  
Nor rules of state, but rules of good

Who hath his life from rumours freed  
Whose conscience is his strong retreat  
Whose state can neither flatterers feed,  
Nor ruin make accusers great

Who God doth late and early pray  
More of his grace than gifts to lend  
And entertains the harmless day  
With a well chosen book or friend

—This man is freed from servile bands  
Of hope to rise, or fear to fall  
Lord of himself, though not of lands  
And having nothing, yet hath all

## The Garden

ANDREW MARVELL

How vainly men themselves amaze  
To win the palm the oak or bays,  
And then uncessant labours see  
Crowned from some single herb or tree  
Whose short and narrow verged shade  
Does prudently their toils upbraid,  
While all flowers and all trees do close  
To weave the garlands of repose

Fair quiet have I found thee here,  
And innocence thy sister dear!  
Mistaken long I sought you then  
In busy companies of men  
Your sacred plants if here below,  
Only among the plants will grow  
Society is all but rude  
To this delicious solitude

No white nor red was ever seen  
So am'rous as this lovely green  
Fond loves cruel as their flame  
Cut in these trees their mistress name  
Little alas they know, or heed  
How far these beauties hers exceed!  
Fair trees! wheresoe'er your barks I wound  
No name shall but your own be found

When we have run our passions' heat  
Love hither makes his best retreat  
The gods that mortal beauty chase  
Still in a tree did end their race  
Apollo hunted Daphne so  
Only that she might laurel grow,  
And Pan did after Syrinx speed  
Not as a nymph, but for a reed

What wondrous life is this I lead!  
Ripe apples drop about my head,  
The luscious clusters of the vine  
Upon my mouth do crush their wine  
The nectarine and curious peach  
Into my hands themselves do reach  
Stumbling on melons as I pass,  
Ensnared with flowers I fall on grass

Meanwhile the mind from pleasures less  
Withdraws into its happiness  
The mind that ocean where each kind  
Does straight its own resemblance find  
Yet it creates transcending these,  
Far other worlds, and other seas  
Annihilating all that's made  
To a green thought in a green shade

Here at the fountain's sliding foot  
Or at some fruit tree's mossy root  
Casting the body's vest aside  
My soul into the boughs does glide,  
There like a bird it sits and sings  
Then whets and combs its silvery wings  
And till prepared for longer flight  
Waves in its plumes the various light

Such was that happy Garden state  
While man there walked without a mate  
After a place so pure and sweet  
What other help could yet be meet!  
But 'twas beyond a mortal's share  
To wander solitary there  
Two paradises were in one  
To live in Paradise alone

How well the skilful gardner drew  
Of flowers and herbs this dial new,

Where from above the milder sun  
Does through a fragrant zodiac run  
And as it works th' industrious bee  
Computes its time as well as we  
How could such sweet and wholesome hours  
Be reckoned but with herbs and flowers!

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## Marvell's "Garden"

William Empson

One of the most noteworthy characteristics of contemporary criticism is its high degree of skill in the close reading of a literary text. As a reaction to the large and loose generalization of nineteenth century literary critics contemporary criticism has made a particular point of the careful scrutiny of the poem word by word with all the overtones of meaning of the word phrase by phrase and line by line until all the possible meanings in the poem have been dissected and laid bare. One consequence of this insistence on the examination of the text has been an emphasis on discovery of ambiguity paradox and tension in a poem. Another consequence has been the tendency to read into a poem more sophisticated meanings than the poet intended or the poem contains. One of the leading English exponents of this method is William Empson himself a poet who was part of the Auden circle of the thirties. He has taught in Japan and China and is now at Sheffield University in England. His most important critical books are *Seven Types of Ambiguity* *Some Versions of Pastoral* and *The Structure of Complex Words*. The essay on Marvell's "The Garden" first appeared in *Scrutiny* but was later expanded: it is the latter form which is reprinted here and represents the *Scrutiny* school and *Scrutiny* style at its sharpest.

### THE IDEAL SIMPLICITY APPROACHED BY RESOLVING CONTRADICTIONS

THE CHIEF point of the poem is to contrast and reconcile conscious and unconscious states intuitive and intellectual modes of apprehension and yet that distinction is never made perhaps could not have been made his thought is implied by his metaphors. There is something very Far Eastern about this. I was set to work on the poem by Dr Richards' recent discussion of a philosophical argument in Mencius. The Oxford edition notes bring out a crucial double meaning (so that this at least is not my own fancy) in the most analytical statement of the poem about the Mind—

Annihilating all that's made  
To a green thought in a green shade

Either reducing the whole material world to nothing material i.e. to a green thought or considering the material world as of no value compared to a green thought either contemplating everything or shutting everything out. This combines the idea of the conscious mind including everything because understanding it and that of the unconscious animal nature including everything because in harmony with it. Evidently the object of such a fundamental contradiction (seen in the etymology turning all *ad nihil* to nothing and to a thought) is to deny its reality: the point is not that these two are essentially different but that they must cease to be different so far as either is to be known. So far as he has achieved his state of ecstasy he combines them: he is neither conscious nor not conscious like the seventh Buddhist state of enlightenment. This gives its point. I think to the other ambiguity clear from the context as to whether the *all* considered was *made* in the mind of the author or the Creator: to so peculiarly creative a knower there is little difference between the two. Here as usual with profound remarks the strength of the thing is to combine an usually intellectual with unusually primitive ideas: thought about the conditions of knowledge with a magical idea that the adept controls the external world by thought.

The vehemence of the couplet and this hint of physical power in thought itself (in the same way as the next line gives it colour) may hint at an idea that one would like to feel was present as otherwise it is the only main idea about Nature that the poem leaves out: that of the *Hymn to David* and *The Ancient Mariner* the Orpheus idea that by delight in Nature when terrible man gains strength to control it. This grand theme too has a root in magic: it is an important version of the idea of the man powerful because he has included everything in himself: is still strong: one would think among the mountain climbers and often the scientists and deserves a few examples here. I call it the idea of the *Hymn to David* though being hidden behind the religious one it is nowhere overtly stated except perhaps in the line

Praise above all for praise prevails

David is a case of Orpheus-like behaviour because his music restrained the madness of Saul.

His furious foes no more malign'd  
When he such melody divin'd  
And sense and soul detain'd

By *darning*—mending—the harmony behind the universe he makes it divine: rather as to discover a law of nature is to give nature laws and this restrains the madman who embodies the unruly forces of nature from killing him. The main argument of

the verses describing nature (or nature as described by David) is that the violence of Nature is an expression of her adoration of God and therefore that the man of prayer who also adores God delights in it and can control it

Strong the gier eagle on his sail  
Strong against tide th enormous whale  
Emerges as he goes

But stronger still in earth or air  
Or in the sea the man of prayer  
And far beneath the tide

The feeling is chiefly carried by the sound, long Latin words are packed into the short lines against a short one syllable rhyming word full of consonants it is like dancing in heavy skirts he juggles with the whole cumbrous complexity of the world The *Manner* makes a more conscious and direct use of the theme but in some degree runs away from it at the end The reason it was a magical crime for a sailor to kill the albatross is that it both occurs among terrible scenes of Nature and symbolises man's power to extract life from them so ought doubly to be delighted in So long as the Manner is horrified by the creatures of the calm he is their slave he is set free to act in the supreme verses of the poem as soon as he delights in them The final moral is

He prayeth best that loveth best  
All things both great and small

But that copybook maxim is fine only if you can hold it firmly together with such verses as this, which Coleridge later omitted

The very deeps did rot oh Christ  
That such a thing could be  
Yea slmy things did crawl with legs  
Upon the slmy sea

And it was these creatures, as he insisted in the margin by giving the same name to both that the Mariner blessed unaware when he discovered their beauty This is what Coleridge meant by alternately saying that the poem has too much of the moral and too little knowing what the conventional phrases of modern Christianity ought to mean he thought he could shift to a conventional moral that needs to be based upon the real one Byron's nature poetry gives more obvious examples of the theme he likes to compare a storm on the Jura or what not to a woman whom we are to feel, only Byron could dominate Poe was startled and liberated by it into a symbol of his own achievement the sailor in *The Maelstrom* is so horrified as to be frozen through a tick of neurosis into idle curiosity, and this becomes a scientific interest in the portent which shows him the way to escape from it

Nature when terrible is no theme of Marvell's and he gets this note of triumph rather from using nature when peaceful to control the world of man

How safe methinks and strong behind  
These Trees have I encamp'd my Mind  
Where Beautyuming at the Heart  
Bends in some Tree its useless Dart  
And where the World no certain Shot  
Can make or me it toucheth not  
But I on it securely play  
And gaul its Horsemen all the Day

The masculine energy of the last couplet is balanced immediately by an acceptance of Nature more masochist than passive in which he becomes Christ with both the nails and the thorns (*Appleton House* lxxvi)

Bind me ye *Woodbines* in your twines,  
Curle me about ye gadding *Vines*  
And Oh so close your *Circles* lace  
That I may never leave this Place  
But lest your *Fetters* prove too weak  
Ere I your *Silken* Bondage break  
Do you *O Brambles* chain me too  
And courteous *Briars* nail me through

He does not deify himself more actively, and in any case the theme of the *Garden* is a repose

How vainly men themselves amaze  
To win the Palm or Oke or Bayes  
And their uncessant Labours see  
Crown'd from some single Herb or Tree  
Whose short and narrow verged Shade  
Does prudently their Toyles upbraid  
While all *Flowers* and all *Trees* do close  
To weave the *Garlands* of repose

This first verse comes nearest to stating what seems the essential distinction with that between powers inherent and power worked out in practice being a general and feeling one could be in this ideal case so the wit of the thing claims the power to have been a general is already satisfied in the garden Unemployment is too painful and normal even in the fullest life for such a theme to be trivial But self knowledge is possible in such a state so far as the unruly impulses are digested ordered made transparent not by then being known at the time as unruly Consciousness no longer makes an important distinction the impulses since they must be balanced already neither need it to put them right nor are put wrong by the way it forces across their boundaries They let themselves be known because they are not altered by being known because then principle of indeterminacy no longer acts This idea is important for all the versions of pastoral for the pastoral figure is always ready to be the critic he not

only includes everything but may in some unexpected way know it

Another range of his knowledge might be mentioned here. I am not sure what arrangement of flower beds is described in the last verse but it seems clear that the sun goes through the zodiac of flowers in one day and that the bees too in going from one bed to another, reminding us of the labours of the first verse, pass all summer in a day. They compute their time as well as we in that though their lives are shorter they too contract all experience into it, and this makes the poet watch over large periods of time as well as space. So far he becomes Nature; he becomes permanent. It is a graceful finale to the all in one theme but not, I think very important, the crisis of the poem is in the middle.

Once you accept the Oxford edition's note you may as well apply it to the whole verse

Meanwhile the Mind from pleasure less  
Withdraws into its happiness  
The Mind that Ocean where each kind  
Does streight its own resemblance find  
Yet it creates transcending these  
Far other worlds and other Seas  
Annihilating

*From pleasure less* Either from the lessening of pleasure — we are quiet in the country but our dullness gives a sober and self knowing happiness more intellectual than that of the over stimulated pleasures of the town or made less by this pleasure — The pleasures of the country give a repose and intellectual release which make me less intellectual make my mind less worrying and introspective. This is the same puzzle as to the consciousness of the thought: the ambiguity gives two meanings to pleasure, corresponding to his Puritan ambivalence about it, and to the opposition between pleasure and happiness. *Happiness* again, names a conscious state and yet involves the idea of things falling right happening so not being ordered by an anxiety of the conscious reason. (So that as a rule it is a weak word: it is by seeming to look at it hard and bring out its implications that the verse here makes it act as a strong one.)

The same doubt gives all their grandeur to the next lines. The sea if calm reflects everything near it, the mind as knower is a conscious mirror. Some where in the sea are sea lions and horses and every thing else though they are different from land ones: the unconsciousness is unplumbed and pathless and there is no instinct so strange among the beasts that it lacks its fantastic echo in the mind. In the first version thoughts are shadows in the second (like the *green thought*) they are as solid as what they image and yet they still correspond to something in the outer world, so that the poet's intuition is comparable

to pure knowledge. This metaphor may reflect back so that *withdraws* means the tide going down: the mind is less now, but will return and it is now that one can see the rock-pools. On the Freudian view of an Ocean, *withdraws* would make this repose in Nature a return to the womb anyway it may mean either withdraws into self contemplation or withdraws altogether, into its mysterious processes of digestion. *Streight* may mean packed together in the microcosm or at once the beasts see their reflection (perhaps the root idea of the metaphor) as soon as they look for it, the calm of Nature gives the poet an immediate self knowledge. But we have already had two entrancingly witty verses about the sublimation of sexual desire into a taste for Nature (I should not say that this theme was the main emotional drive behind the poem, but it takes up a large part of its overt thought), and the *kinds* look for their *resemblance*, in practice, out of a desire for *creation* in the mind at this fertile time for the poet they can *find* it at once being packed together. The transition from the beast and its reflection to the two pairing beasts implies a transition from the correspondences of thought with fact to those of thought with thought to find which is to be creative: there is necessarily here a suggestion of rising from one level of thought to another and in the next couplet not only does the mind transcend the world it mirrors but a sea, to which it is parallel transcends both land and sea too which implies self consciousness and all the antinomies of philosophy. Whether or not you give *transcendent* the technical sense predicable of all categories makes no great difference in including everything in itself the mind includes as a detail itself and all its inclusions. And it is true that the sea reflects the *other worlds* of the stars. Donne's metaphor of the globe is in the background. Yet even here the double meaning is not lost: all land beasts have their sea-beasts but the sea also has the kraken in the depths as well as the transcendence of the mind are things stranger than all the kinds of the world.

Miss M. C. Bradbrook has pointed out to me that the next verse, while less triumphant gives the process a more firmly religious interpretation.

Here at the Fountains sliding foot  
Or by some Fruit trees mossy root  
Casting the Bodies Vest aside  
My soul into the boughs does glide  
There like a Bird it sits and sings  
Then whets and combs its silver Wings  
And till prepar'd for longer flight  
Waves in its Plumes the various Light

The bird is the dove of the Holy Spirit and carries a suggestion of the rainbow of the covenant. By becoming inherent in everything he becomes a soul

not pantheist but clearly above and apart from the world even while still living in it Yet the paradoxes are still firmly maintained here, and the soul is as solid as the green thought The next verse returns naturally and still with exultation to the jokes in favour of solitude against women

*Green* takes on great weight here, as Miss Sackville West pointed out because it has been a pet word of Marvell's before To list the uses before the satires may seem an affectation of pedantry, but shows how often the word was used and they are pleasant things to look up In the Oxford text pages 12 I 23 17 I 18 25 I 11 27 I 4 38 I 3, 45 I 3 46 I 25, 48 I 18 49 I 48 70 I 376 71 I 390 74 I 510 122, I 2 Less rich uses 15 I 18 21 I 44, 30, I 55, 42, I 14 69 I 339 74, II 484 496, 78 I 628 85 I 82 89 I 94 108 I 196 It is connected here with grass buds children, an as yet virginal prospect of sexuality and the peasant stock from which the great families emerge The unfathomable grass makes the soil fertile and shows it to be so it is the humble permanent undeveloped nature which sustains everything and to which everything must return No doubt D H Lawrence was right when he spoke up for Leaves of Grass against Whitman and said they felt themselves to be very aristocratic but that too is eminently a pastoral fancy Children are connected with this both as buds, and because of their contact with Nature (as in Wordsworth), and unique fitness for Heaven (as in the Gospels)

The tawny mowers enter next  
Who seem like Israelites to be  
Walking on foot through a green sea

connects greenness with oceans and gives it a magical security,

And in the greenness of the grass  
Did see my hopes as in a glass

connects greenness with mirrors and the partial knowledge of the mind The complex of ideas he concentrates into this passage, in fact had been worked out already and in a context that shows how firmly these ideas about Nature were connected with direct pastoral The poem indeed comes immediately after a pastoral series about the mower of grass

I am the Mower Damon known  
Through all the Meadows I have mown  
On me the Morn her dew distills  
Before her durling Daffodils

In these meadows he feels he has left his mark on a great territory, if not on everything and as a typical figure he has mown all the meadows of the world in either case Nature gives him regal and magical honours and I suppose he is not only the

rulee but the executioner of the daffodils—the Clown as Death

Only for him no Cure is found  
Whom Juliana's Eyes do wound  
Tis death alone that this must do  
For Death thou art a Mower too

He provides indeed more conscious and comic mixtures of heroic and pastoral

every Mower's wholesome heat  
Smelled like an Alexander's sweat

It is his grand attack on gardens which introduces both the connection through wit between the love of woman and of nature, which is handled so firmly in the *Garden*

No white nor red was ever seen  
So amorous as this lovely green

—and the belief that the fruitful attitude to Nature is the passive one

His [the gardener's] green *Seraglio* has its  
Eunuchs too  
Lest any Tyrant him outdoe  
And in the Cherry he does Nature vex  
To procreate without a Sex  
Tis all enforced the Fountain and the Grot,  
While the sweet Fields do lye forgot  
Where willing Nature does to all dispence  
A wild and fragrant Innocence  
And *Fauns* and *Fayes* do the Meadows till  
More by their presence than their skill

It is Marvell himself who tills the Garden by these magical and contemplative powers

Grass indeed comes to be taken for granted as the symbol of pastoral humility

Unhappy Birds! what does it boot  
To build below the Grasses Root  
When Lowness is unsafe as Height  
And Chance overtakes what scapeth Spight?

It is a humility of Nature from which she is still higher than man so that the grasshoppers preach to him from their pinnacles

And now to the Abyss I pass  
Of that unfathomable Grass  
Where men like Grasshoppers appear  
But Grasshoppers are Gyants there  
They in their squeaking Laugh contemn  
Us as we walk more low than them  
And from the Precipices tall  
Of the green spires to us do call

It seems also to be an obscure merit of grass that it produces hay, which was the name of a country dance so that the humility is gaiety



With this the golden fleece I shear  
Of all these Closes ev'ry Year  
And though in Wool more poor than they  
Yet I am richer far in Hay

To nineteenth century taste the only really poetical verse of the poem is the central fifth of the nine. I have been discussing the sixth whose dramatic position is an illustration of its very penetrating theory. The first four are a crescendo of wit on the themes success or failure is not important only the repose that follows the exercise of one's powers and women I am pleased to say, are no longer interesting to me, because nature is more beautiful. One effect of the wit is to admit and so make charming the impertinence of the second of these, which in deed the first puts in its place, it is only for a time and after effort among human beings, that he can enjoy solitude. The value of these moments made it fitting to pretend they were eternal, and yet the lightness of his expression of their sense of power is more intelligent and so more convincing than Wordsworth's solemnity on the same theme because it does not forget the opposing forces.

When we have run our Passions heat,  
Love hither makes his best retreat  
The Gods that mortal beauty chase  
Still in a Tree did end their race  
Apollo hunted *Daphne* so  
Only that she might Laurel grow  
And *Pan* did after *Syrinx* speed  
Not as a Nymph but for a Reed

The energy and delight of the conceit has been sharpened or keyed up here till it seems to burst and transform itself: it dissolves in the next verse into the style of Keats. So his observation of the garden might mount to an ecstasy which disregarded it: he seems in this next verse to imitate the process he has described to enjoy in a receptive state the exhilaration which an exercise of wit has achieved. But striking as the change of style is, it is unfair to empty the verse of thought and treat it as random description: what happens is that he steps back from overt classical conceits to a rich and intuitive use of Christian imagery. When people treat it as the one good bit of the poem one does not know whether they have recognised that the Alpha and Omega of the verse are the Apple and the Fall.

What wondrous Life in this I lead!  
Ripe Apples drop about my head  
The Luscious Clusters of the Vine  
Upon my Mouth do crush their Wine  
The Nectaren and curious Peach  
Into my hands themselves do reach  
Stumbling on Melons as I pass  
Insnaled with Flowers I fall on Grass

*Melon* again is the Greek for apple: all flesh is *grass* and its own *flowers* here are the snakes in it that stopped Eurydice. Mere grapes are at once the primitive and the innocent wine, the *nectar* of Eden and yet the blood of sacrifice. *Curious* could mean rich and strange (Nature), improved by care (art) or inquisitive (feeling towards me since nature is a mirror as I do towards her). All the eatable beauties give themselves so as to lose themselves, like a lover with a forceful generosity like a lover they *ensnare* him. It is the triumph of the attempt to impose a sexual interest upon nature: there need be no more Puritanism in this use of sacrificial ideas than is already inherent in the praise of solitude and it is because his repose in the orchard hints at such a variety of emotions that he is contemplating *all that's made*. Sensibility here repeats what wit said in the verse before: he tosses into the fantastic treasure chest of the poem's thought all the pathos and dignity that Milton was to feel in his more celebrated Garden, and it is while this is going on we are told in the next verse that the mind performs its ambiguous and memorable *withdrawal*. For each of the three central verses he gives a twist to the screw of the microscope and is living in another world.

I must go back to the *annihilating* lines whose method is less uncommon. Similar ideas and tricks of language are used in Donne's *Exstasie* where various puns impose on us the idea that an adequate success in love is a kind of knowledge which transcends the barriers of the ordinary kind. There is again some doubt how far the author knew what he was doing.

As our blood labours to beget  
Spirits as like souls as it can  
So must pure lovers' souls descend

To the modern reader this is a pun on the senses: subtle material essence (e.g. spirits of salt) and non-material unit of life; it seems used with as much wit as the other puns to trick us into feeling that soul and body may be interfused. The Oxford edition notes make clear that to Donne this was neither a pun nor a sophistry. The spirits are the thin and active part of the blood and are of a kind of middle nature between soul and body (Sermons). One view of them was that there was a hierarchy of more and more spiritual ones. It is curious how the change in the word leaves the poetry unaffected by Swift's time: the two senses were an absurd accident from which one could get ironies against materialism. No doubt in some important senses Donne was right but however supported by Cambridge Platonism it is a genuine primitive use of the word. Whereas he would certainly have known there was a pun on sense even if he

took it for granted Our bodies why do we for  
beare?

We owe them thanks because they thus  
Did us to us at first convey  
Yielded their forces sense to us  
Nor are dross to us but alloy

The antithesis for *alloy* makes it mean alloy a less valuable substance put into their gold to strengthen it for practical use *alloy* could mean keeping the spiritual pleasure from being too great more than our strength could bear which goes with alloy, then behind that relief to the pain of desire" which makes the flesh less unimportant This is reinforced by the special meaning of sense ( the wanton stings and motions of the s ) That rich word confuses the pleasure and the knowledge given the senses (Donne wants to imply they are mutually dependent) and suggests that soul and body are in a healthy intuitive relation— plenty of sense The use of *sense* for sensibleness became stronger later in the century, but it is already clearly an element in the word—for example in saying there is no sense in a statement when it has meaning but is not sensible We could not know each other at all without sensations, therefore cannot know each other fully without sensuality, nor would it be sensible to try to do so

The poem uses the word again later, and there the sexual meaning is clear

So must pure lovers souls descend  
To affections and to faculties  
Which sense may reach and apprehend  
Else a great Prince in prison lies  
To our bodies turn we then

*Affections* are 'loves weaknesses, and in the philosophical sense physical effects *Apprehend* means know and by derivation clutch and *reach* would go with either, which gives sense a sort of bridge between its meanings

It is possible that Donne means to throw in a pun on know, as in Adam knew his wife

Wee then who are this new soules know  
Of what we are compos'd and made  
For the Atomies of which we grow  
Are soules which no change can invade

*Know* is isolated by the comma ( know each other ) and *of* may then take a step towards by means of Then with Donne's usual leap in pretending to give a reason, he makes each soul entirely immaterial 'the intellectual knowledge has, for us, all the advantages of the physical one even granted that they are distinguishable If he did this it would have to be done consciously and wilfully

One should not of course take such poetry as only

a clever game This truth seeking idea seems fundamental to the European convention of love poetry love is always idealised as a source of knowledge not only of the other party but of oneself and of the world

This Ecstasie doth unperplex

because it makes the disparate impulses of the human creature not merely open to the prying of the mind but prepared for its intrusion It is along these lines I think that D H Lawrence's hatred of the whole conception might be answered, or rather that he answered it himself On the other hand, I think Donne felt quite casual about these particular tricks the juggle with *sense* has the same graceful impudence as his frankly absurd arguments M Legouis may be right in saying that he set out merely to dramatise the process of seduction it is only clear that he found the argument fascinating and believed that it had some truth in some cases He did not think it so false as to depend on his puns even where he recognised them, he may well have understood what the puns themselves depend upon They insist on relics of primitive thought in civilised language and thereby force the language to break down its later distinctions and return to ideas natural to the human mind Dr Richards account of romantic nature poetry in *Coleridge on Imagination* is a very good example the personalised Nature is treated both as external to man and as created by an instinct of the mind and by tricks of language these are made to seem the same But if they were simply called the same we would not so easily be satisfied by the tricks What we feel is that though they are essentially unlike they are practically unlike in different degrees at different times a supreme condition can therefore be imagined, though not attained, in which they are essentially like (To put it like this is no doubt to evade a philosophic issue ) A hint of the supreme condition is thus found in the actual one (this makes the actual one include everything in itself) but this apparently exalted claim is essentially joined to humility it is effective only through the admission that it is only a hint Something of the tone of pastoral is therefore inherent in the claim the fault of the Wordsworthian method seems to be that it does not show this

I shall add here a pun from *As You Like It*, which shows how the same issue may be raised by a casual joke The pun in its context makes a contradiction and this is felt to show an intuitive grasp of some of the puzzles of the context Fortunately there is no doubt that a pun is meant because the text insists upon it the *NED* shows that the modern spelling though used loosely already made the distinction Apart from facsimiles no edition that I have seen has yet printed the text The point of the two spellings is

to show that the two senses are at work, it is none the less fun to take the senses the other way round (This is from the Folio there is no Quarto)

CLOWN truly I would the Gods hadde made thee poeticall

AUDREY I do not know what Poetical is is it honest in word and deed is it a true thing?

CLOWN No trulie for the truest poetrie is the most faining and Louers are given to Poetrie and what they sweare in Poetrie may be said as Louers they do feigne

AUDREY Do you wish then that the Gods had made me Poetical?

CLOWN I do truly for thou swearst to me thou art honest Now if thou wert a Poet I might haue some hope thou didst feigne

A material fool is the pleased judgment of the listening Jaques, he feels that there is a complete copy of the human world among fools as of beasts among sea beasts. This indeed is one of the assumptions of pastoral that you can say everything about complex people by a complete consideration of simple people. The jokes are mainly carried on by puns on honest—chastity in women, truth in speech, simplicity in clowns, and the hearty sense generous because free from hypocrisy. My point is the pun on *fain* (*desiring*) and *feign* (*pretend* in lovers *pretend honest desire*). The doubt of the poet's honesty is referred to the broader doubt of his self-knowledge just as *honest* itself shifts from truth-telling to sincere in his own mind. The pun itself is common though I think it is only here where it enriches the thought so much that Shakespeare spelt it out for the reader.

EGEUS Thou hast by mooneligh at her window sang  
With faining voice verses of faining love  
And stolne the impression of her fantasie

He feigns true love because he would fain possess her, the word *love* itself may be used of a desire not permanent or generous, Egeus would call that a feigning love even if Nature deceives both of them and the man thinks himself sincere. The easy but capacious mind of Spenser takes this for granted (FQ, V.ii.36 Hymn to Love, 216) nobody pretends without purpose so it is a useful trick of language. Touchstone's use of it about poetry is more searching.

The root of the joke is that a physical desire drives the human creature to a spiritual one. The best poetry is the most genuinely passionate (*fain*) but there may be two pretences (*feign*) that the desire felt for this woman is spiritual and that any woman is the object of so spiritual a desire. To write poetry is not the quickest way to satisfy desire, there must be some other impulse behind the convention of love poetry something feigned in the choice of

topic some other thing of which they are fun. As for the distinction between their roles as poets and lovers both senses may apply to them in both also to *swearing* since *go to hell* is spontaneous not meant not meant to deceive and a sort of feigning in which you are fain of what you feign. For that matter they are wooing the reader even if they are not trying to seduce a mistress the process at its simplest involves desire and detachment nature and sophistication levels mysteriously interrelated which a sane man separates only for a joke. Touchstone's pretence of acidity allows of a real plea for his own case because it implies that the most refined desires are inherent in the plainest and would be false if they weren't. He shows a staircase by giving the two lowest steps lust and cheating. In the Marvell and Donne examples it is the top of the staircase that is in question but the same method is used to define it. Two ideas are united which in normal use are contradictory and our machinery of interpretation so acts that we feel there is a series of senses in which they could be more and more truly combined. This is clearest in what Mr James Smith defined as metaphysical conceits those that genuinely sum up a metaphysical problem. The top and next steps in the Aristotelian staircase about form and matter for example would be pure form and the material already form, which it informs. Donne is using this when he calls each lover's soul the body of the others the fact that we do not believe that the lovers are in this condition does not keep us from a feeling of belief in the conceit because we believe in the staircase which it defines the lovers appear as conscious of the staircase and higher up on it than most. Nor for that matter do we believe that the clown is at the bottom of his staircase his understanding of it acts as a proof that he isn't. A good case of a poem with some doubt about the staircase it requires is provided by Shakespeare's *Phoenix and Turtle* it depends on the same ideas as Donne's *First Anniversary* but gets very different feelings out of them. The entire flatness of the use of the convention makes it seem first an engagingly simple-minded piece of idealism and then since the union of the birds is likely after all to be of a simple kind, an expression of cultivated and good humoured sensuality, this does not by any means destroy the pathetic dignity of the close. There is a suggestion that the author finds the convention fascinating but absurd which he shows mainly by his sound effects. This seems to me intentional very delightful and not a thing that Chapman (who has been suggested as the author) could possibly have done. It is clear here that once you cease to impose a staircase the thing shifts from heroic to mock-pastoral. Some such idea needs to be added to Mr James Smith's account (perhaps he would call it obvious) because other

wise there seems no way of putting in a judgment of value on his account a metaphysical conceit is essentially a vivid statement of a puzzle and in practice it is more

I should say that this process is at work in much poetry that does not seem ambiguous at all and shall pursue the question into Homer as the fountain head of simplicity. This may also throw some light on the obscure connection between heroic and pastoral the fact seems to be that both rely on a complex in simple formula

One idea essential to a primitive epic style is that the good is not separable (anyway at first level judgments) from a life of straightforward worldly success in which you keep certain rules the plain satisfactions are good in themselves and make great the men who enjoy them. From this comes the sense of glory and of controlling nature by delight in it. It is absurd to call this a premoralistic view since the rules may demand great sacrifices and it is shameful not to keep them there is merely a naive view of the nature of good (Both a limitation of the things that are good and a partial failure to separate the idea of good from the idea of those things). The naive view is so often more true than the sophisticated ones that this comes in later ages to take on an air of massive grandeur, it gives a feeling of freedom from humbug which is undoubtedly noble, and the Homeric heroes support this by the far from savage trait of questioning the beliefs they still die for. Stock epithets about the good wine or the well built gates imply so one always rightly feels such a thing essentially has virtue in it as a piece of virtue a later reader feels this to be symbolic, a process of packing all the sorts of good into a simple one. Material things are taken as part of a moral admiration and to a later reader (with less pride for example in the fact that his culture uses none) this seems an inspiring moral paradox like those of pastoral—to one who knows how to live the ideal is easily reached. It is assumed that Ajax is still enormously grand when he cooks his dinner, the later reader feels he must really be very grand not to lose his dignity, whereas at the time it was a thing of some splendour to have so much dinner to cook or such implements to do it with. This comes to have the same effect as a pretence of pastoral humility in the author. Also the heroic individual has an enormous effect on everything in sight gods and men and yet finds everything of manageable dimensions the later reader feels that this belongs to a village society rather than a large-town one. Certainly the heroes are not grand merely because they are brave, they can run away like other people and say so more frankly. Indeed a great part of their dignity comes from the naive freshness with which they can jump from one level of argument to an

other and this leaves room for the effects I am considering

Thus the puzzles become more obvious later but this is not to say they were not used at the start. The heroes are given a directly moral grandeur by the perpetual clashes between freewill and necessity symbolised by their relations with the gods out of which they construct their speeches they fight on when certain of failure and kill each other with the apology that they too are fated and such foreknowledge as they have makes them half divine. It is very curious that what is supposed to be another branch of the same race when it arrived in India had none of this interest in the problems of freewill the dignity of the heroes in the Mahabharata is based on puzzles about the One and the Many. Nor did it develop later the Buddha was once actually faced with the problem of freewill raised so starkly by his system and brushed it aside on grounds of morality. I understand that all Buddhist theologians have ignored the issue. Whereas all new ideas in Europe Christianity and the sciences in turn, have been taken as new problems about necessity and freewill. Thus the reason why the Homeric *but* where one expects and has so much poetic force is that it implies some argument such as all the characters are happy with and the argument would lead you to other levels of thought (This acts as a feeling that the two things put together are vividly different in themselves). He spoke and held still his hand upon the silvery hilt and thrust back the great sword into the scabbard nor did he disobey the order of Minerva but she had gone to Olympus, to the mansions of aegis bearing Jove amongst the other deities. *But* makes her already indifferent the puzzle about how far men are free and how far the gods are only forces in their minds is thrust upon your attention. Also there is a strong feeling in the epic that the heroes are too great to kill each other for detested Helen and the unnecessary recovery of corpses (Nor do I fear so much about the dead body of Patroclus which will quickly satiate the dogs and birds of the Trojans as much as I fear for my own head lest it suffer anything and for thine) and yet that only this would display their greatness a rich contradiction on which to build a hierarchy of value. I began by saying that such writing was based on a naive idea of the nature of good but in fact other ideas of good are implicit in it. Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* is often taken as a sort of parody of the *Iliad*, but there is little in it that Homer did not imply. What becomes strange to a more sophisticated society is the order in which the ideas can be built up in such a society everybody has been told some refined ideas about good (or what not) and wants them put in at once to take a simple thing and imply a hierarchy in it can then

only be done in a strange world like that of Milton's Adam or a convention like that of pastoral. To say this is to echo what many of Homer's critics including Milton himself have said about the peculiar advantage he got from his date and I am only trying to show that it fits in with my theory.

I have not been able to say what machinery erects a staircase on a contradiction but then the only essential for the poet is to give the reader a chance to build an interesting one: there are continual opportunities in the most normal uses of language. Any statement of identity between terms already defined (God is love) is a contradiction because you already know they are not identical; you have to ignore senses that would be unimportant (the first cause was a creative impulse) and there are likely to be degrees in which the two may be called identical which lead to different important senses. That the process is not simple is obvious when you turn them round, love is God would be quite different. Might is Right and Right is Might were felt to be clear and opposite statements of ethical theory and it is not clear how this was possible. It is no good to read them as if a man has might then he has right, etc. a supporter of this opinion would say that if a man has no might he has no right, and the two sentences are still identical. The same applies to the similar interpretations. Might is a member of the class Right etc., it would be the only member of its class. I think these are at work: the analogy of the second word to an adjective in this version shows how the first is felt to be the more solid and unchangeable. But the second word is in fact belittled rather than made inclusive. Yet you cannot read them simply as substitutions: always say might instead of right: there is no reason for not making a full use of power and never calculate chances: to be in the right is the only thing to be considered. These are present and seem to control the senses from the back but the subdued word is still there and is not negated. *Right* in the first is some sort of justification and *might* in the second some sort of hope or claim. A great and crowded nation has the right to expand, because we have right on our side we are certain to win. A vague sense that *is* has other uses than the expression of identity makes us ready to find meanings in such sentences: this may well have been the historical reason why it was too convenient to be simplified. But the principle of language that makes the two different is simply a traffic rule, the two words are felt to cover some of the same ground and in some cases of conflict the first has the right of way.

It might I think also be argued that any contradiction implies a regress though not one definite one. To say that it is always an example of the supreme process of seeing the Many as One is to ignore the

differences in the feelings aroused by different examples but there may always be a less ambitious process at work that uses similar machinery. The pretence that two words are identical acts as a hint that they have been fitted into some system in which each key word is dependent on the others like the parts of an organism: admittedly the words are not the same but they have been unified. One characteristic of an organism is that you can only change it (as a whole and without killing it) by a process like edging up a chimney in rock climbing: one element must be changed to the small extent that the elasticity of the system allows and then the others must be changed to fit it. So to find your way into the interpretation seems essentially a process of shifting the words again and again. This at least describes the sense of richness (readiness for argument not pursued) in such language and the fact that one ambiguity even though obtained in several parallel words, is not enough for it.

That this talk about a hierarchy of levels is vague I can cheerfully admit: the idea is generally vague in the authors who use it, and none the less powerful for being left in a suggestive form. But the three central verses of the Marvell poem are at least a definite example in the course of suggesting various interlocking hierarchies (knowing that you know that you know, reconciling the remaining unconscious with the increasing consciousness uniting in various degrees perception and creation: the one and the many) it does in fact rise through a hierarchy of three sharply contrasted styles and with them give a more and more inclusive account of the mind's relation to Nature. Only a metaphysical poet with so perfect a sense of form and so complete a control over the tricks of the style at the end of its development could actually dramatise these hints as he gave them.

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 What techniques of criticism does Empson employ?
- 2 With what other critics represented here is he most closely allied? With whom does he most differ?
- 3 Does it seem to you that he is reading too much into the poem or conversely getting too much out of it? On what basis do you make your judgment?
- 4 Is this method of analysis applicable to other poems?
- 5 Does a reading of this essay help you in your understanding and appreciation of Marvell's poem?

## The Quiet Life

ALEXANDER POPE

Happy the man whose wish and care  
A few paternal acres bound

Content to breathe his native air  
In his own ground 4

Whose herds with milk whose fields with bread  
Whose flocks supply him with attire,  
Whose trees in summer yield him shade  
In winter fire

Blest who can unconcern'dly find  
Hours days and years slide soft away 10  
In health of body peace of mind,  
Quiet by day,

Sound sleep by night, study and ease  
Together mixed sweet recreation,  
And innocence which most does please 15  
With meditation

Thus let me live unseen, unknown,  
Thus unlamented let me die,  
Steal from the world, and not a stone  
Tell where I lie 20

## "Lasciate Ogni Speranza"

JOHN CLARE

I am! yet what I am who cares, or knows?  
My friends forsake me, like a memory lost  
I am the self consumer of my woes  
They rise and vanish, an oblivious host  
Shadows of life, whose very soul is lost 5  
And yet I am—I live—though I am toss'd

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,  
Into the living sea of waking dream  
Where there is neither sense of life, nor joys  
But the huge shipwreck of my own esteem 10  
And all that's dear Even those I loved the best  
Are strange—nay, they are stranger than the rest

I long for scenes where man has never trod—  
For scenes where woman never smiled or wept—  
There to abide with my Creator, God 15  
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept,  
Full of high thoughts, unborn So let me lie,  
The grass below, above, the vaulted sky

## Birches

ROBERT FROST

When I see birches bend to left and right  
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,  
I like to think some boy's been swinging them  
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay 4

Ice storms do that Often you must have seen them  
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning  
After a rain They click upon themselves  
As the breeze rises, and turn many colored  
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel  
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal  
shells 10

Shattering and avalanching on the snow crust—  
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away  
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen  
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the  
load

And they seem not to break, though once they are  
bowed 15

So low for long they never right themselves  
You may see their trunks arching in the woods  
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground  
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair  
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun 20

But I was going to say when Truth broke in  
With all her matter of fact about the ice storm  
I should prefer to have some boy bend them  
As he went out and in to fetch the cows—

Some boy too far from town to learn baseball 25  
Whose only play was what he found himself,  
Summer or winter and could play alone  
One by one he subdued his father's trees  
By riding them down over and over again

Until he took the stiffness out of them 30  
And not one but hung limp not one was left  
For him to conquer He learned all there was  
To learn about not launching out too soon  
And so not carrying the tree away

Clear to the ground He always kept his poise 35  
To the top branches, climbing carefully  
With the same pains you use to fill a cup  
Up to the bums and even above the bums  
Then he flung outward feet first, with a swish

Kicking his way down through the air to the  
ground 40

So was I once myself a swinger of birches  
And so I dream of going back to be  
It's when I'm weary of considerations,  
And life is too much like a pathless wood

Where your face burns and tickles with the cob  
webs 45

Broken across it and one eye is weeping  
From a twigs having lashed across it open  
I'd like to get away from earth awhile  
And then come back to it and begin over  
May no fate willfully misunderstand me 50

And half-giant what I wish and snatch me away  
Not to return Earth's the right place for love  
I don't know where it's likely to go better  
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,  
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk 55

Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,

But dipped its top and set me down again  
That would be good both going and coming back  
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches



*Can Spring Be Far Behind?  
Hope for Mankind*

Yet there are some poets who refuse to succumb or  
tamely accept For as Shelley writes

Many a green isle needs must be  
In the deep wide sea of misery  
Aye many flowering islands lie  
In the waters of wide agony

The Earth will grow young again he assures us for If Winter comes can Spring be far behind? The promise of hope for mankind which fires Shelley's mind in the Ode to the West Wind so that the poem swirls and swoops and rides like the wind itself reaches its climax in the greatest of romantic dramas his *Prometheus Unbound* particularly in its closing chorus with its note of triumph resounding like the Ode to Joy in Beethoven's Ninth Life can be good Whitman sings O the joy of my spirit—it is uncaged—it darts like lightning! And all experiences are good—the rush of the train the quiet contentment of a country walk the excitement of the fire bell O the joy of that vast elemental sympathy which only the human soul is capable of generating and emitting in steady and limitless floods Therefore he fishes he boats he works he fights he speaks he engages himself with other men

O while I live to be the ruler of life not a slave  
To meet life as a powerful conqueror,  
No fumes no ennui nor more complaints or scornful  
criticisms

To these proud laws of the air the water and the  
ground

And nothing exterior shall ever take command of me

He lives and is not afraid of death

Finally what better symbol of the bridge between man and man than a bridge itself and Hart Crane finds in its cables its pathway and its pillars the arch over the gulf from despair to hope from hate to love from here to Atlantis

## Ode to the West Wind

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

**I**

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being  
Thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing

Yellow and black and pale and hectic red  
Pestilence-stricken multitudes O thou  
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds where they lie cold and low  
Each like a corpse within its grave until  
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her claim o'er the dreaming earth and fill 10  
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
With living hues and odors plain and hill

Wild Spirit which art moving everywhere,  
Destroyer and preserver hear oh hear!

## II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commo-  
tion

Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed  
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and  
Ocean

Angels of rain and lightning there are spread  
On the blue surface of thine aery surge  
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head 20

Of some fierce Maenad even from the dim verge  
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,  
The locks of the approaching storm Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night  
Will be the dome of a vast sepulcher  
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapors, from whose solid atmosphere  
Black rain and fire and hail will burst oh, hear!

### III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams  
The blue Mediterranean where he lay 30  
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiæ's bay  
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers  
Quivering within the wave's intense day

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers      55  
So sweet, the sense fants picturing them! Thou  
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms while far below  
The sea blooms and the oozy woods which wear  
The sapless foliage of the ocean know

Thy voice and suddenly grow gray with fear  
And tremble and despoil themselves oh heart!



## IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear  
 If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee  
 A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share 45

The impulse of thy strength only less free  
 Than thou O uncontrollable! If even  
 I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,  
 As then when to outstrip thy skiey speed 50  
 Scarce seemed a vision I would nee have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need  
 Oh lift me as a wave a leaf a cloud!  
 I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chamed and bowed 55  
 One too like thee tameless, and swift and proud

## V

Make me thy lvre, even as the forest is  
 What if my leaves are falling like its own!  
 The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep autumnal tone 60  
 Sweet though in sadness Be thou Spirit fierce  
 My spirit! Be thou me impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe  
 Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!  
 And, by the incantation of this verse 65

Scatter as from an unextinguished hearth  
 Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!  
 Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,  
 If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind? 70

## A Song of Joys

WALT WHITMAN

O to make the most jubilant song!  
 Full of music—full of manhood, womanhood in  
 fancy!  
 Full of common employments—full of grain and  
 trees

O for the voices of animals—O for the swiftness and  
 balance of fishes!

O for the dropping of raindrops in a song! 5  
 O for the sunshine and motion of waves in a song!

O the joy of my spirit—it is uncaged—it darts like  
 lightning!  
 It is not enough to have this globe on a certain time  
 I will have thousands of globes and all time

O the engineer's joys! to go with a locomotive! 10  
 To hear the hiss of steam the merry shriek the  
 steam whistle the laughing locomotive!  
 To push with resistless way and speed off in the dis-  
 tance

O the gleesome saunter over fields and hillsides!  
 The leaves and flowers of the commonest weeds the  
 moist fresh stillness of the woods  
 The exquisite smell of the earth at daybreak and  
 all through the forenoon 15

O the horseman's and horsewoman's joys!  
 The saddle the gallop the pressure upon the seat  
 the cool gurgling by the ears and hair

O the fireman's joys!  
 I hear the alarm at dead of night  
 I hear bells shouts! I pass the crowd I run! 20  
 The sight of the flames maddens me with pleasure

O the joy of the strong brawny fighter, towering in  
 the arena in perfect condition conscious of  
 power, thirsting to meet his opponent

O the joy of that vast elemental sympathy which  
 only the human soul is capable of generating  
 and emitting in steady and limitless floods

O the mother's joys!  
 The watching the endurance the precious love the  
 anguish the patiently yielded life 25

O the joy of increase, growth, recuperation,  
 The joy of soothing and pacifying, the joy of con-  
 cord and harmony

O to go back to the place where I was born  
 To hear the birds sing once more  
 To ramble about the house and barn and over the  
 fields once more 30  
 And through the orchard and along the old lanes  
 once more

O to have been brought up on bays lagoons creeks  
 or along the coast  
 To continue and be employ'd there all my life  
 The briny and damp smell the shore, the salt weeds  
 exposed at low water,  
 The work of fishermen, the work of the eel fisher and  
 clam-fisher, 35

I come with my clam rake and spade I come with  
my eel spear  
Is the tide out? I join the group of clam diggers on  
the flats

I laugh and work with them, I joke at my work like  
a mettlesome young man,

In winter I take my eel basket and eel spear and  
travel out on foot on the ice—I have a small  
axe to cut holes in the ice

Behold me well clothed going gayly or returning in  
the afternoon, my brood of tough boys accom-  
panying me 40

My brood of grown and part grown boys, who love  
to be with no one else so well as they love to  
be with me,

By day to work with me, and by night to sleep with  
me

Another time in warm weather out in a boat, to lift  
the lobster pots where they are sunk with heavy  
stones (I know the buoys)

O the sweetness of the Fifth month morning upon  
the water as I row just before sunrise toward  
the buoys,

I pull the wicker pots up slantingly, the dark green  
lobsters are desperate with their claws as I take  
them out, I insert wooden pegs in the joints of  
their pincers 45

I go to all the places one after another, and then  
row back to the shore,

There in a huge kettle of boiling water the lobsters  
shall be boiled till their color becomes scarlet

Another time mackerel-taking,  
Voracious, mad for the hook near the surface they  
seem to fill the water for miles

Another time fishing for rock fish in Chesapeake  
Bay I one of the brown-faced crew 50

Another time trailing for blue fish off Paumanok I  
stand with braced body

My left foot is on the gunwale my right arm throws  
far out the coils of slender rope,

In sight around me the quick veering and darting of  
fifty skiffs, my companions

O boating on the rivers,  
The voyage down the St Lawrence, the superb  
scenery, the steamers 55

The ships sailing the Thousand Islands the occa-  
sional timber raft and the raftsmen with long  
reaching sweep oars

The little huts on the rafts, and the stream of smoke  
when they cook supper at evening

(O something pernicious and dread!  
Something far away from a puny and pious life!

Something unproved! something in a trance! 60  
Something escaped from the anchorage and driving  
free)

O to work in mines, or forging iron,  
Foundry casting the foundry itself the rude high  
roof the ample and shadowd space  
The furnace, the hot liquid poured out and running

O to resume the joys of the soldier! 65  
To feel the presence of a brave commanding officer  
—to feel his sympathy!

To behold his calmness—to be warmed in the rays  
of his smile!

To go to battle—to hear the bugles play and the  
drums beat!

To hear the crash of artillery—to see the glittering  
of the bayonets and musket barrels in the sun!

To see men fall and die and not complain! 70

To taste the savage taste of blood—to be so devilish!  
To gloat so over the wounds and deaths of the  
enemy

O the whaleman's joys! O I cruise my old cruise  
again!

I feel the ship's motion under me I feel the Atlantic  
breezes fanning me,

I hear the cry again sent down from the mast head  
*There—she blows!* 75

Again I spring up the rigging to look with the rest  
—we descend wild with excitement

I leap in the lowered boat we row toward our prey  
where he lies,

We approach stealthy and silent I see the moun-  
tainous mass, lethargic basking

I see the harpooner standing up I see the weapon  
dart from his vigorous arm, 79

O swift again far out in the ocean the wounded  
whale settling, running to windward tows me

Again I see him rise to breathe we row close again

I see a lance driven through his side, pressed deep,  
turned in the wound

Again we back off I see him settle again the life is  
leaving him fast

As he rises he spouts blood I see him swim in circles  
narrower and narrower swiftly cutting the wa-  
ter—I see him die

He gives one convulsive leap in the centre of the  
circle and then falls flat and still in the bloody  
foam 85

O the old manhood of me, my noblest joy of all!  
My children and grand children, my white hair and  
beard

My largeness calmness majesty, out of the long  
stretch of my life

O upen d joy of womanhood! O happiness at list!  
 I am more than eighty years of age I am the most  
 venerable mother, 90  
 How clear is my mind—how all people draw nigh  
 to me!  
 What attractions are these beyond any before? what  
 bloom more than the bloom of youth?  
 What beauty is this that descends upon me and  
 rises out of me?

O the orator's joys!  
 To inflate the chest to roll the thunder of the voice  
 out from the ribs and throat 95  
 To make the people rage weep, hate desire with  
 yourself,  
 To lead America—to quell America with a great  
 tongue

O the joy of my soul leaning poised on itself re-  
 ceiving identity through materials and loving  
 them observing characters and absorbing them  
 My soul vibrated back to me from them from sight  
 hearing, touch reason articulation, compar-  
 ison memory and the like  
 The real life of my senses and flesh transcending  
 my senses and flesh 100  
 My body done with materials, my sight done with  
 my material eyes  
 Proved to me this day beyond cavil that it is not my  
 material eyes which finally see  
 Nor my material body which finally loves, walks  
 laughs, shouts embraces, procreates

O the farmer's joys!  
 Ohioan's, Illinoisian's, Wisconsinese, Kanadian's  
 Iowan's, Kansian's, Missourian's, Oregonese  
 joys! 105  
 To rise at peep of day and pass forth nimbly to work  
 To plough land in the fall for winter sown crops  
 To plough land in the spring for maize,  
 To tram orchards, to graft the trees, to gather apples  
 in the fall

O to bathe in the swimming bath or in a good place  
 along shore, 110  
 To splash the water! to walk ankle deep or race  
 naked along the shore

O to realize space!  
 The plenteousness of all, that there are no bounds  
 To emerge and be of the sky of the sun and moon  
 and flying clouds as one with them

O the joy of a manly self hood! 115  
 To be servile to none, to defer to none, not to any  
 tyrant known or unknown

To walk with erect carriage a step springy and  
 elastic  
 To look with calm gaze or with a flashing eye  
 To speak with a full and sonorous voice out of a  
 broad chest  
 To confront with your personality all the other per-  
 sonalities of the earth 120

Knowst thou the excellent joys of youth?  
 Joys of the dear companions and of the merry word  
 and laughing face?  
 Joy of the glad light beaming day joy of the wide  
 breathed games?  
 Joy of sweet music joy of the lighted ball room and  
 the dancers?  
 Joy of the plenteous dinner, strong carouse and  
 drinking? 125

Yet O my soul supreme!  
 Knowst thou the joys of pensive thought?  
 Joys of the free and lonesome heart, the tender  
 gloomy heart?  
 Joys of the solitary walk, the spirit bowed yet proud  
 the suffering and the struggle?  
 The agonistic throes the ecstasies joys of the solemn  
 musings day or night? 130  
 Joys of the thought of Death the great spheres Time  
 and Space?  
 Prophetic joys of better loftier love's ideals the  
 divine wife the sweet eternal, perfect com-  
 rade?  
 Joys all thine own undying one joys worthy thee  
 O soul  
 O while I live to be the ruler of life not a slave  
 To meet life as a powerful conqueror 135  
 No fumes no ennui no more complaints or scornful  
 criticisms  
 To these proud laws of the air the water and the  
 ground proving my interior soul impregnable  
 And nothing exterior shall ever take command of  
 me

For not life's joys alone I sing repeating—the joy  
 of death!  
 The beautiful touch of Death soothing and benumb-  
 ing a few moments for reasons 140  
 Myself discharging my excruciating body to be  
 burned or rendered to powder or buried  
 My ical body doubtless left to me for other spheres  
 My voided body nothing more to me returning to  
 the purifications further offices, eternal uses of  
 the earth

O to attract by more than attraction!  
 How it is I know not—yet behold! the something  
 which obeys none of the rest, 145

It is offensive never defensive—yet how magnetic  
it draws

O to struggle against great odds to meet enemies  
undaunted!

To be entirely alone with them to find how much  
one can stand!

To look strife torture prison popular odium face  
to face!

To mount the scaffold to advance to the muzzles of  
guns with perfect nonchalance! 150

To be indeed a God!

O to sail to sea in a ship!

To leave this steady unendurable land

To leave the tiresome sameness of the streets, the  
sidewalks and the houses

To leave you O you solid motionless land and enter  
ing a ship 155

To sail and sail and sail!

O to have life henceforth a poem of new joys!

To dance clap hands exult shout skip leap roll  
on float on!

To be a sailor of the world bound for all ports

A ship itself (see indeed these sails I spread to the  
sun and air) 160

A swift and swelling ship full of rich words full of  
joys

## Atlantis

HART CRANE

*Music is then the knowledge of that which  
relates to love in harmony and system*

PLATO

Through the bound cable strands the arching path  
Upward, veering with light the flight of strings,—

Taut miles of shuttling moonlight syncopate

The whispered rush telepathy of wires

Up the index of night granite and steel— 5

Transparent meshes—fleckless the gleaming staves—

Sibylline voices flicker waveringly stream

As though a god were issue of the strings

And through that cordage threading with its call  
One arc synoptic of all tides below— 10

Their labyrinthine mouths of history

Pouring reply as though all ships at sea

Complichted in one vibrant breath made cry—

Make thy love sure—to weave whose song we ply!

—From black embankments, moveless soundings  
hailed 15

So seven oceans answer from their dream

And on obliquely up bright carrier bars

New octaves trestle the twin monoliths

Beyond whose fisted capes the moon bequeaths

Two worlds of sleep (O arching strands of song!)—

Onward and up the crystal flooded aisle 21

White tempest nets file upward upward ring

With silver terraces the humming spais

The loft of vision palladium helm of stars

Sheerly the eyes, like seagulls stung with rime— 25

Slit and propelled by glistening fins of light—

Pick biting way up towering looms that press

Sidelong with flight of blade on tendon blade

—Tomorrows into yesteryear—and link

What cipher script of time no traveller reads 31

But who, through smoking pyres of love and death

Searches the timeless laugh of mythic spears

Like hails farewells—up planet-sequenced heights

Some trillion whispering hammers glimmer Tyie

Seerely sharply up the long inviol cry 35

Of mchling æons silence rivets Troy

And you, aloft there—Jason! hesting Shout!

Still wrapping harness to the swarming air!

Silvery the rushing wake surpassing call

Beams yelling Æolus! splintered in the struts! 40

From gulfs unfolding, terrible of drums,

Tall Vision of the Voyage tensely spare—

Bridge lifting night to cycloramic crest

Of deepest day—O Choir translating time

Into what multitudinous Verb the suns 45

And synergy of waters ever fuse recast

In myriad syllables—Psalm of Cathay!

O Love thy white, pervasive Paradigm

We left the haven hanging in the night—

Sheened harbor lanterns backward fled the keel 50

Pacific here at times end bearing corn—

Eyes stammer through the pangs of dust and steel

And still the circular indubitable fueze

Of heaven's meditation, yoking wave

To kneeling wave one song devoutly binds— 55

The vernal strophe chimes from deathless stings!

O Thou steeled Cognizance whose leap commits

The agile precincts of the lark's return

Within whose lanat sweep encinctured sing

In single chrysalis the many twain— 60

O' stars Thou art the stitch and stallion glow

And like an organ Thou with sound of doom—

Sight sound and flesh Thou ledest from times

realm

As love strikes clear direction for the helm

Swift peal of secular light intrinsic Myth 65

Whose fell unshadow is death's utter wound—

O River throated—iridescently upborne  
Through the bright diench and fabric of our veins  
With white escapments swinging into light  
Sustained in tears the cities are endowed 70  
And justified conclamant with ripe fields  
Revolving through their harvests in sweet torment

Forever Deity's glittering Pledge O Thou	
Whose canticle fresh chemistry assigns	
To rapt inception and beatitude —	75
Always through blinding cables to our joy	
Of thy white seizure springs the prophecy	
Always through spiraling cordage pyramids	
Of silver sequel Deity's young name	
Kinetic of white choiring wings ascends	80

Migrations that must needs void memory  
 Inventions that cobblestone the heart,—  
 Unspeakable Thou Bridge to Thee O Love  
 Thy pardon for this history whitest Flower  
 O Answerer of all,—Anemone — 85  
 Now while thy petals spend the suns about us  
     hold—  
 (O Thou whose radiance doth inherit me)  
 Atlantis,—hold thy floating singer late!

So to thine Everpresence beyond time  
Like spears ensanguined of one tolling star      90  
That bleeds infinity—the orphic strings  
Sidereal phalanxes, leap and converge  
—One Song one Bridge of Fire! Is it Cathay  
Now pity steepes the grass and rainbows ring  
The serpent with the eagle in the leaves      ? 95  
Whispers antiphonal in azure swing



## *The Known Rules of Ancient Liberty Political Poems*

Arnold called Shelley a beautiful and ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain and for most people this description has become the stereo type for all poets—impractical unworldly dreamers broken on the wheel of reality But one has only to think of Sophocles the general Dante the political exile Shake speare the successful man of business and Milton the foreign secretary to realize how absurd this attitude is poets are of this world On the other hand there are those who demand that the poet be so immersed in the world that he identify himself completely with the par ticular political creeds they happen to profess and that he use his gifts as a poet to sing the slogans of party

To be sure the poet ought not to be exempt from the responsibilities of man as citizen (taken in its widest sense) but he must be left free to discharge his responsibilities in his own way. The poet is stirred by belief not by creed and he will speak for liberty but not for party. In this group of poems we hear the poet's voice raised in praise of liberty, liberty broadly conceived, liberty for all men.

We begin with Milton who from the point of view of the scholar who knows his classics and of the Christian who believes in the worth of the individual distinguishes between liberty and license. From the seventeenth century on the city of Venice was to the English the symbol of what free men could achieve with its fall they were faced with finding another symbol of political freedom and in Byron's Ode it is the newly born America which takes over that inspiring role.

One great clime  
Whose vigorous offspring by dividing ocean  
Are kept apart and nursed in the devotion  
Of freedom which their fathers fought for and  
Bequeath'd—a heritage of heart and hand

In contrast with his usual exuberant flow of imagery is the plain speaking of Shelley's *Song to the Men of England* which expresses his hatred of oppression and his passion for justice when he had to the aristocratic poet knew how to make himself understood clearly enough by the people of England

The moral fervor which moved the Northern antislave movement is the inspiration of Whittier's song one of the many antislavery poems which he wrote. Finally Auden's *The Unknown Citizen* is the poet's protest against the dehumanization of man by the all-devouring state the individual has been squeezed into the mold of the average man.

Was he free? Was he happy? The question  
is absurd

Absurd perhaps to the bureaucrat but—luckily for us—  
not to the poet who keeps us alive by insisting that we  
are people and not ciphers

On the Detraction Which  
Followed Upon My  
Writing Certain Treatises

JOHN MILTON

## XII

I did but prompt the age to quit their clogs  
By the known rules of ancient liberty  
When straight a barbarous noise environs me  
Of owls and cuckoos, asses, apes and dogs,  
As when those hinds that were transformed to fogs

Railed at Latona's twin-born progeny  
Which after held the Sun and Moon in fee  
But this is got by casting pearl to hogs  
That bawl for freedom in their senseless mood  
And still revolt when truth would set them free 10  
License they mean when they cry liberty  
For who loves that must first be wise and good  
But from that mark how far they rove we see,  
For all this waste of wealth and loss of blood

## Ode on Venice

GEORGE GORDON LORD BYRON

I

Oh Venice! Venice! when thy marble walls  
Are level with the waters, there shall be  
A cry of nations o'er thy sunken halls,  
A loud lament along the sweeping sea!  
If I a northern wanderer weep for thee 5  
What should thy sons do?—anything but weep  
And yet they only murmur in their sleep  
In contrast with their fathers—as the slime  
The dull green ooze of the receding deep  
Is with the dashing of the spring-tide foam 10  
That drives the sailor to his shipless home  
Are they to those that were and thus they creep  
Crouching and crab-like through their sapping  
streets  
Oh! agony—that centuries should reap  
No mellow harvest! Thirteen hundred years 15  
Of wealth and glory turned to dust and tears,  
And every monument the stranger meets  
Church palace pillar as a mourner greets,  
And even the Lion all subdued appears  
And the harsh sound of the barbarian drum 20  
With dull and daily dissonance repeats  
The echo of thy tyrant's voice along  
The soft waves once all musical to song  
That heaved beneath the moon-light with the throng  
Of gondolas—and to the busy hum 25  
Of cheerful creatures, whose most sinful deeds  
Were but the overbeating of the heart,  
And flow of too much happiness which needs  
The aid of age to turn its course apart  
From the luxuriant and voluptuous flood 30  
Of sweet sensations battling with the blood  
But these are better than the gloomy errors  
The weeds of nations in their last decay  
When vice walks forth with her unsoftened terrors  
And mirth is madness and but smiles to slay 35  
And hope is nothing but a false delay  
The sick man's lightning half an hour ere death  
When faintness the last mortal birth of pain,  
And apathy of limb, the dull beginning  
Of the cold staggering race which death is winning,

Steals vein by vein and pulse by pulse away  
Yet so relieving the o'er-tortured clay  
To him appears renewal of his breath  
And freedom the mere numbness of his chain —  
And then he talks of life and how again 45  
He feels his spirits soaring—albeit weak  
And of the fresher air which he would seek  
And as he whispers knows not that he gasps  
That his thin finger feels not what it clasps  
And so the film comes o'er him—and the dizzy 50  
Chamber swims round and round—and shadows  
busy

At which he vainly catches fit and gleam  
Till the last rattle chokes the strangled scream  
And all is ice and blackness—and the earth  
That which it was the moment ere our birth 55

II

There is no hope for nations! Search the page  
Of many thousand years—the daily scene  
The flow and ebb of each recurring age,  
The everlasting *to be* which *hath been*  
Hath taught us nought or little still we lean 60  
On things that rot beneath our weight and wear  
Our strength away in wrestling with the air  
For 'tis our nature strikes us down the beasts  
Slaughter'd in hourly hecatombs for feasts  
Are of as high an order—they must go 65  
Even where their driver goads them though to  
slaughter  
Ye men who pour your blood for kings as water  
What have they given your children in return?  
A heritage of servitude and woes  
A blindfold bondage where your hire is blows 70  
What? do yet the red hot ploughshares burn  
O'er which you stumble in a false ordeal  
And deem this proof of loyalty the *real*  
Kissing the hand that guides you to your scars,  
And glorying as you tread the glowing bars? 75  
All that your sires have left you all that time  
Bequeaths of free and history of sublime  
Spring from a different theme!—Ye see and read  
Admire and sigh, and then succumb and bleed!  
Save the few spirits who, despite of all 80  
And worse than all the sudden crimes engender'd  
By the down-thundering of the prison wall  
And thurst to swallow the sweet waters tender'd  
Gushing from freedom's fountains—when the crowd  
Madden'd with centuries of drought are loud 85  
And trample on each other to obtain  
The cup which brings oblivion of a chain  
Heavy and sore,—in which long yoked they plough'd  
The sand,—or if there sprung the yellow gram 89  
'Twas not for them their necks were too much bow'd  
And their dead palates chew'd the cud of pain —  
Yes—the few spirits—who despite of deeds  
Which they abhor, confound not with the cause

Those momentary starts from nature's laws,  
Which like the pestilence and earthquake smite 95  
But for a term, then pass and leave the earth  
With all her seasons to repair the blight  
With a few summers, and again put forth  
Cities and generations—fair, when free—  
For tyranny there blooms no bud for thee! 100

## III

Glory and empire! once upon these towers  
With freedom—god-like triad! how ye sate!  
The league of mightiest nations in those hours  
When Venice was an envy, might abate  
But did not quench her spirit—in her fate 105  
All were enwrap'd the feasted monarchs knew  
And loved their hostess, nor could learn to hate,  
Although they humbled—with the kingly few  
The many felt for from all days and climes  
She was the voyager's worship even her crimes 110  
Were of the softer order—born of love  
She drank no blood nor fattened on the dead,  
But gladden'd where her harmless conquests spread  
For these restored the cross, that from above  
Hallow'd her sheltering banners, which incessant 115  
Flew between earth and the unholy crescent  
Which, if it waned and dwindled earth may thank  
The city it has clothed in chains which clank  
Now creaking in the ears of those who owe  
The name of freedom to her glorious struggles 120  
Yet she but shares with them a common woe  
And call'd the kingdom of a conquering foe,—  
But knows what all—and, most of all, *we* know—  
With what set gilded terms a tyrant juggles!

## IV

The name of commonwealth is past and gone 125  
O'er the three fractions of the groaning globe,  
Venice is crush'd and Holland deigns to own  
A sceptre and endures the purple robe,  
If the free Switzer yet bestrides alone  
His chamless mountains, tis but for a time, 130  
For tyranny of late is cunning grown,  
And in its own good season tramples down  
The sparkles of our ashes One great clime,  
Whose vigorous offspring by dividing ocean  
Are kept apart and nursed in the devotion 135  
Of freedom which their fathers fought for, and  
Bequeath'd—a heritage of heart and hand  
And proud distinction from each other land  
Whose sons must bow them at a monarch's motion  
As if his senseless sceptre were a wand 140  
Full of the magic of exploded science—  
Still one great clime in full and free defiance  
Yet rears her crest unconquer'd and sublime,  
Above the far Atlantic! She has taught  
Her Esau brethren that the haughty flag, 145  
The floating fence of Albion's feeblest crag,

May strike to those whose red right hands have  
bought  
Rights cheaply earn'd with blood Still still for ever  
Better though each man's life blood were a river  
That it should flow and overflow than creep 150  
Through thousand lazy channels in our veins  
Damm'd like the dull canal with locks and chains  
And moving as a sick man in his sleep  
Three paces and then faltering better be  
Where the extinguish'd Spartans still are free 155  
In their proud charnel of Thermopylae  
Than stagnate in our marsh—or o'er the deep  
Fly and one current to the ocean add  
One spirit to the souls our fathers had,  
One freeman more America to thee! 160

## Song to the Men of England

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Men of England wherefore plough  
For the lords who lay ye low?  
Wherefore weave with toil and care  
The rich robes your tyrants wear?  
  
Wherefore feed and clothe, and save  
From the cradle to the grave  
Those ungrateful drones who would  
Dram your sweat—nay, drink your blood?

Wherefore bees of England, forge  
Many a weapon, cham, and scourge 10  
That these stingless drones may spoil  
The forced produce of your toil?

Have ye leisure, comfort calm,  
Shelter food love's gentle balm?  
Or what is it ye buy so dear 15  
With your pain and with your fear?

The seed ye sow, another reaps,  
The wealth ye find, another keeps,  
The robes ye weave another wears  
The arms ye forge, another bears 20

Sow seed—but let no tyrant reap  
Find wealth—let no impostor heap  
Weave robes—let not the idle wear  
Forge arms—in your defense to bear

Shrink to your cellars, holes, and cells 25  
In halls ye deck another dwells  
Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see  
The steel ye tempered glance on ye



With plough and spade and hoe and loom  
Trace your grave and build you tomb  
And weave your winding sheet till fair  
England be your sepulcher

## The Kansas Emigrants

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

We cross the prairie as of old  
The pilgrims crossed the sea  
To make the West as they the East,  
The homestead of the free!

We go to rear a wall of men  
On Freedom's Southern line,  
And plant beside the cotton tree  
The rugged Northern pine!

We're flowing from our native hills  
As our free rivers flow  
The blessing of our Mother land  
Is on us as we go

We go to plant our common schools  
On distant prairie swells,  
And give the Sabbaths of the wild  
The music of her bells

Upbearing like the Ark of old,  
The Bible in our van,  
We go to test the truth of God  
Against the fraud of man

No pause nor rest save where the streams  
That feed the Kansas run,  
Save where our Pilgrim gonfalon  
Shall flout the setting sun!

We'll tread the prairies as of old  
Our fathers sailed the sea,  
And make the West as they the East,  
The homestead of the free!

## The Unknown Citizen

W H AUDEN

(To JS/07/M/378 This Marble Monument Is  
Erected by the State)

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be  
One against whom there was no official complaint,  
And all the reports on his conduct agree  
That in the modern sense of an old fashioned word  
he was a saint.

For in everything he did he served the Greater Community

Except for the War till the day he retired  
He worked in a factory and never got fired  
But satisfied his employers Fudge Motors Inc  
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views  
For his Union reports that he paid his dues 10  
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)  
And our Social Psychology workers found  
That he was popular with his mates and liked a  
drink

The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day  
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way

Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,  
And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured

Both Producers Research and High Grade Living declare

He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Installment Plan

And had everything necessary to the Modern Man, 20  
A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire  
Our researchers into Public Opinion are content  
That he held the proper opinions for the time of  
year

When there was peace he was for peace when there was war. he went

He was married and added five children to the population

Which our Eugenist says was the right number for  
a parent of his generation,

And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.

Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd  
Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have  
heard



## *Shadwell Never Deviates Parody and Satire*

It is not to be thought that the flood of English poetry is capable of dealing only with the most solemn and elevated subjects. On the contrary the English muse of comedy is perhaps the richest and most fanciful of any literature, and she is equally at home in satire parody mock heroic and nonsense verse. A whole host of great comic inventors comes crowding in to be mentioned Chaucer and his pilgrims Shakespeare and his Falstaff

Butler and his puritans Pope and his elegant ladies and gentlemen Swift and his scientists Sterne and his Uncle Toby Byron and his critics Lewis Carroll and his looking glass Gilbert and his Sullivan

We start with Shakespeare's take off on the cloying excesses of the Elizabethan love sonnet which is matched in devastating effect by Cartwright's protest against the intellectual excesses of the Donne tradition both poets having themselves been guilty of these exaggerations know only too well where the chinks in the armor are and drive through them We go on to Dryden's satire on the poet Shadwell perhaps the most brilliantly sustained piece of invective in the language

The rest to some faint meaning make pretence  
But Shadwell never deviates into sense

But Pope is not far behind if indeed at all in the mastery of brutal characterization as the selection from the *Moral Essays* shows

Most people think of Byron as the arch romantic in poetry as well as in person and this may be true but Byron the satirist comes closer to being the real Byron and nowhere are his powers as the slashing critic of fusty and musty England better displayed than in *Don Juan* We present here the episode of the return to England in which Byron speaks from a very bitter heart Never was a society more mercilessly castigated than that in which Don Juan had his English adventures—and never did a society more zealously purchase the book describing those adventures

When Wordsworth was good he was very very good but when he was bad he was horrid the consequence has been that Wordsworth has become the happy hunting-ground of the parodist Hartley Coleridge's parody of Wordsworth in the meter of the Lucy poems picks the poet off base with razor like accuracy Swinburne's style made it fair game for the satirist also and perhaps no poet has been more bedeviled than he but the best parody of his style and language is his own We finish with the high moral note sounded by Mr Ogden Nash—for we too would leave no tern unstoned and on our banner is this strange device Physician seal thyself

## My Mistress' Eyes

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

My mistress eyes are nothing like the sun  
Coral is far more red than her lips red  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head  
I have seen roses damasked, red and white 5  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks  
I love to hear her speak yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound 10

I grunt I never saw a goddess go  
My mistress when she walks, treads on the ground  
And yet by heaven I think my love as rue  
As any she belied with false compare

## No Platonique Love

WILLIAM CARTWRIGHT

Tell me no more of minds embracing minds  
And hearts exchanged for hearts,  
That spirits spirits meet as winds do winds  
And mix their subtlest parts  
That two unbodied essences may kiss 5  
And then, like angels, twist and feel one bliss

I was that silly thing that once was wrought  
To practice this thin love  
I climbed from sex to soul from soul to thought  
But thinking there to move 10  
Headlong I rolled from thought to soul and then  
From soul I lighted at the sex again

As some strict down-looked men pretend to fast,  
Who yet in closets eat,  
So lovers who profess they spirits taste 15  
Feed yet on grosser meat  
I know they boast they souls to souls convey  
However they meet the body is the way

Come I will undeceive thee they that tread  
Those vain aerial ways 20  
Are like young heirs and alchemists misled  
To waste their wealth and days  
For searching thus to be forever rich,  
They only find a medicine for the itch

## from Mac Flecknoe

JOHN DRYDEN

All human things are subject to decay  
And when Fate summons, monarchs must obey  
This Flecknoe found, who like Augustus young  
Was call'd to empire and had govern'd long  
In prose and verse, was own'd without dispute 5  
Thro' all the realms of *Nonsense* absolute  
This aged pounce now flourishing in peace  
And blest with issue of a large increase  
Worn out with business, did at length debate 10  
To settle the succession of the State  
And pondering which of all his sons was fit  
To reign, and wage immortal war with wit,  
Cried 'Tis resolved, for Nature pleads that he  
Should only rule who most resembles me

Sh ----- alone my perfect image bears  
 Mature in dulness from his tender years  
 Sh ----- alone of all my sons is he  
 Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity  
 The rest to some faint meaning make pretence  
 But Sh ----- never deviates into sense  
 Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,  
 Strike thro' and make a lucid interval  
 But Sh -----'s genuine night admits no ray,  
 His rising fogs prevail upon the day

from **Moral Essays**

ALEXANDER POPE

III

Search then the ruling passion There alone,  
 The wild are constant and the cunning known  
 The fool consistent and the false sincere,  
 Priests princes women no dissemblers here  
 This clue once found, unravels all the rest  
 The prospect clears and Wharton stands confessed  
 Wharton, the scorn and wonder of our days,  
 Whose ruling passion was the lust of praise  
 Born with whatever could win it from the wise,  
 Women and fools must like him or he dies,  
 Though wondering senates hung on all he spoke,  
 The club must hail him master of the joke  
 Shall parts so various aim at nothing new?  
 Hell shine a Tully and a Wilmot too  
 Then turns repentant and his God adores  
 With the same spirit that he drinks and whores,  
 Enough, if all around him but admire,  
 And now the punk applaud and now the fiar  
 Thus with each gift of nature and of art,  
 And wanting nothing but an honest heart  
 Crown'd all to all from no one vice exempt  
 And most contemptible, to shun contempt,  
 His passion still to covet general praise,  
 His life, to forfeit it a thousand ways  
 A constant bounty which no friend has made  
 An angel tongue which no man can persuade,  
 A fool with more of wit than half mankind,  
 Too rash for thought, for action too refined  
 A tyrant to the wife his heart approves,  
 A rebel to the very king he loves,  
 He dies, sad outcast of each church and state,  
 And, harder still! flagitious yet not great  
 Ask you why Wharton broke through every rule?  
 'Twas all for fear the knaves should call him fool  
 Nature well known, no prodigies remain,  
 Comets are regular, and Wharton plain

15 from **Don Juan**

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

20 CANTO III

XCI

Milton's the prince of poets—so we say,  
 A little heavy but no less divine  
 An independent being in his day—  
 Learned, pious temperate in love and wine,  
 But, his life falling into Johnson's way  
 We're told this great high priest of all the Nine  
 Was whipt at college—a harsh sire—odd spouse,  
 For the first Mrs Milton left his house

XCII

All these are, *certainly* entertaining facts,  
 Like Shakespeare's stealing deer Lord Bacon's  
 bribes  
 Like Titus' youth and Caesar's earliest acts  
 Like Burns (whom Doctor Currie well describes)  
 Like Cromwell's planks—but although truth exacts  
 These amiable descriptions from the scribes  
 As most essential to their hero's story  
 They do not much contribute to his glory

XCIII

All are not moralists, like Southey when  
 He prated to the world of Pantisocracy  
 Or Wordsworth unexcised unhired, who then  
 Seasoned his pedlar poems with democracy  
 Or Coleridge long before his flighty pen  
 Let to the Morning Post its aristocracy  
 When he and Southey, following the same path,  
 Espoused two partners (milliners of Bath)

XCIV

Such names at present cut a convict figure,  
 The very Botany Bay in moral geography  
 Their loyal treason renegade ingour,  
 Are good manure for their more bare biography  
 Wordsworth's last quarto, by the way, is bigger  
 Than any since the birthday of typography,  
 A drowsy frowsy poem called the Excursion,  
 Writ in a manner which is my aversion

XCV

He there builds up a formidable dyke  
 Between his own and others' intellect,

But Wordsworth's poem and his followers, like 35  
 Joanna Southcote's Shiloh and her sect  
 Are things which in this century don't strike  
 The public mind—so few are the elect  
 And the new births of both their stale virginites  
 Have proved but dropsies taken for divinities 40

## XCVI

But let me to my story I must own,  
 If I have any fault it is digression—  
 Leaving my people to proceed alone  
 While I soliloquize beyond expression  
 But these are my addresses from the throne 45  
 Which put off business to the ensuing session  
 Forgetting each omission is a loss to  
 The world not quite so great as Ariosto

## XCVII

I know that what our neighbours call *longueurs*  
 (We've not so good a *word* but have the *thing* 50  
 In that complete perfection which ensues  
 An epic from Bob Southey every spring)—  
 Form not the true temptation which allures  
 The reader but 'twould not be hard to bring  
 Some fine examples of the *epopee* 55  
 To prove its grand ingredient is *ennui*

## XCVIII

We learn from Horace Homer sometimes sleeps  
 We feel without him Wordsworth sometimes  
 wakes—  
 To show with what complacency he creeps  
 With his dear *Waggoners* around his lakes 60  
 He wishes for a boat to sail the deeps—  
 Of ocean?—No of air and then he makes  
 Another outcry for a little boat,  
 And drivels seas to set it well afloat

## XCIX

If he must fain sweep o'er the ethereal plain 65  
 And Pegasus runs restive in his Waggon  
 Could he not beg the loan of Charles's Wain?  
 Or play Medea for a single dragon?  
 Or if too classic for his vulgar brain  
 He feared his neck to venture such a nag on, 70  
 And he must needs mount nearer to the moon,  
 Could not the blockhead ask for a balloon?

## C

Pedlars and Boats and Waggon's! Oh! ye shades  
 Of Pope and Dryden are we come to this?

That trash of such sort not alone evades 75  
 Contempt but from the bathos vast abyss  
 Floats scumlike uppermost and these Jack Cades  
 Of sense and song above your graves may hiss—  
 The little boatman and his Peter Bell  
 Can sneer at him who drew Achitophel! 80

## He Lived Amidst th' Untrodden Ways

HARTLEY COLERIDGE

He lived amidst th' untrodden ways  
 To Rydal Lake that lead  
 A bud whom there were none to praise  
 And very few to read

Behind a cloud his mystic sense 5  
 Deep hidden, who can spy?  
 Bright as the night when not a star  
 Is shining in the sky

Unread his works—his Milk White Doe  
 With dust is dark and dim 10  
 It's still in Longman's shop and oh!  
 The difference to him!

## Nephelidia

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

From the depth of the dreamy decline of the dawn  
 through a notable nimbus of nebulous noon-  
 shine,

Pallid and pink as the palm of the flag flower that  
 flickers with fear of the flies as they float  
 Are they looks of our lovers that lustily lean from  
 a marvel of mystic miraculous moonshine

These that we feel in the blood of our blushes that  
 thicken and threaten with throbs through the  
 throat?

Thicken and thrill as a theatre thronged at appeal of  
 an actor's appalled agitation 5

Fainter with fear of the fires of the future than  
 pale with the promise of pride in the past  
 Flushed with the famishing fullness of fever that  
 reddens with radiance of rather recreation,  
 Gaunt as the ghastliest of glimpses that gleam  
 through the gloom of the gloaming when  
 ghosts go aghast?

Nay for the nick of the tick of the time is a trem-  
 ulous touch on the temples of terror,  
 Stained as the sinews yet strenuous with strife

of the dead who is dumb as the dust-heaps  
 of death 10  
 Surely no soul is it sweet as the spasm of erotic  
 emotional exquisite error  
 Bathed in the balms of beatified bliss beatific itself  
 by beatitude's breath  
 Surely no spuit or sense of a soul that was soft to the  
 spirit and soul of our senses  
 Sweetens the stress of suspending suspicion that sobs  
 in the semblance and sound of a sigh  
 Only this oracle opens Olympian in mystical moods  
 and triangular tenses— 15  
 Life is the lust of a lamp for the light that is dark  
 till the dawn of the day when we die  
 Mild is the mirk and monotonous music of memory  
 melodiously mute as it may be  
 While the hope in the heart of a hero is bruised by  
 the breach of men's rapiers resigned to the  
 rod  
 Made meek as a mother whose bosom beats bound  
 with the bliss binging bulk of a balm breath-  
 ing baby  
 As they grope through the graveyard of creeds  
 under skies growing green at a groan for the  
 guinness of God 20  
 Blank is the book of his bounty beholden of old and  
 its binding is blacker than bluer  
 Out of blue into black is the scheme of the skies,  
 and their dews are the wine of the bloodshed  
 of things  
 Till the darkling desire of delight shall be free as a  
 fawn that is freed from the fangs that pursue  
 her  
 Till the heart-beats of hell shall be hushed by a  
 hymn from the hunt that has harried the  
 kennel of kings

Everybody's Mind to Me  
a Kingdom Is, or, a Great  
Big Wonderful World It's

OGDEN NASH

Some melodies are popular as well as classical,  
 which I suppose makes them popsicles  
 And some poems are part William Cullen Bryant  
 and part Nick Kenny, which makes them thana-  
 topsicles,  
 And to some people Wisconsin is what Guinevere  
 was to Launcelot  
 And if they are away from it they are Wisconsinate  
 Some naturalists know why the sphinx is sphinxlike  
 and the giffin is giffinny 5

And some couples are so wealthy that even their  
 tiffs are from Tiffany  
 Some Angeleno socialites fine each other a dollar  
 If they sav La Jolla  
 And give each other a Picasso or a Goya  
 For pronouncing it La Hoya 10  
 Why should not I pick up a masterpiece or a coin?  
 I will no longer say Des Moines  
 I shall sail into the C B & Q ticket office like a  
 swan  
 And ask for a lower to Day Mwahn  
 Thus I shall do because I am a conscientious man  
 when I throw rocks at sea birds I leave no  
 tern unstoned 15  
 I am a meticulous man and when I portray baboons  
 I leave no stern untuned  
 I am a man who values the fitness of things above  
 notoriety and pelf  
 Which is why I am happy I heard the cockney  
 postmaster say to a doctor who was returning  
 a lepiechaun to Gloccamoria in an open  
 envelope Physician seal thyself



## Feet of Clay

So far all the poems which have been reprinted here have been distinguished by some felicity of word or image or style or thought they have been critically speaking good poems But it is a salutary thing to have at hand some poems which though they have been written by poets of reputation are nevertheless clear failures so that we can inquire why they are failures and examine how they have gone wrong We intend only to raise the questions leaving it to you to answer them on the basis of what you have learned from your reading and analysis of the other poems To begin then with the poem by Drayton

And though this earthly bed fade and die  
Thy name shall mount upon eternity

Here is a sonnet which in form and thought is very much like Shakespeare's sonnet 'Like as the Waves'. Yet when we compare the two we wonder why is the Dravton so wooden stuff and earthbound when placed side by side with the Shakespeare? Again let us compare Crashaw's 'The Weeper' with Donne's 'Batter My Heart'. We do not call into question the sincerity of Crashaw's religious conviction yet why is his poem so sickly sweet so false in feeling and tone?

Every morn from hence  
A brisk cherub something sips

Whose soft influence  
 Adds sweetness to his sweetest lips  
 Then to his music and his song  
 Tastes of this breakfast all day long

Now consider Mrs Brownings *A Child Asleep* in connection with Wordsworth's poems on the theme of childhood. Why are his poems so sharp and clear to the inward eye while her poem no doubt as sincerely felt as his is so woolly and diffused in thought and image

Shapes of brightness overlean thee  
 Flash their diadems of youth  
 On the ringlets which half screen thee  
 While thou smilest not in sooth  
*Thy* smile but the overfair one dropt from  
 some ethereal mouth

And then the love poem by the Reverend Whurr after all he has said no more than what Arnold has said about love as the defense against crumbling values in *Dover Beach* yet can we avoid laughing?

While lasting joys the man attend  
 Who has a polish'd female friend!

Is it not the laughter of embarrassment for are we not made uneasy by the contrast between the so proper language (leg equals limb) and the so vulgar thought?

Compare Tennyson's *Mechanophilus* with his own *Ulysses*. Both after all express the same faith in progress and in the future in which the Victorians (some of them) so ardently believed. Yet why is *Ulysses* so stirring a figure of faith and the *Mechanophilus*—well consider

Dash back that ocean with a pier  
 Strow yonder mountain flat  
 A railway there a tunnel here  
 Mix me this Zone with that!

Then there is the most troublesome case of the lot. Here is the famous poem by Clough breathing hope in the face of adversity yet when we compare it to Mr Eliot's *The Hollow Men* do we not feel that Clough has fallen victim to mawkish sentimentality?

But westward look the land is bright

But the problem remains is it only that taste has changed like a fashion in clothes will the judgment of the twenties be reversed by the judgment of the fifties just as the judgment of the twenties reversed the judgment of the eighties? Which then is right and why? And if we cannot answer how do we arrive at any sure criteria of taste and judgment at all?

Finally we have the ever vexing problem of Poe and the problem boils down to this. Is he a fake or a genuine poet a deliberate trickster or an inspired poet? We present *The Raven* and the poet's own explanation of its genesis and purpose and we do this knowing full well that the explanation does not really explain or rather explains something altogether else

## Sonnet from Idea

MICHAEL DRAYTON

Whilst thus my pen strives to eternize thee  
 Age rules my lines with wrinkles on my face,  
 Where in the map of all my misery  
 Is modeled out the world of my disgrace  
 Whilst in despite of tyrannizing times  
 Medea-like I make thee young again  
 Proudly thou scornst my world outweeping rhymes  
 And murderst virtue with thy cov' disdaim  
 And though in youth my youth untimely perish  
 To keep thee from oblivion and the grave  
 Ensuing ages yet my rhymes shall cherish  
 Where I entombed, my better part shall save,  
 And though this earthly bed fade and die,  
 Thy name shall mount upon eternity

## The Weeper

RICHARD CRASHAW

Hail sister springs  
 Parents of silver footed rills!  
 Ever bubbling things,  
 Thawing crystal snowy hills!  
 Still spending never spent I mean  
 Thy fair eyes, sweet Magdalene

Heavens thy fair eyes be  
 Heavens of ever falling stars  
 'Tis seed time still with thee  
 And stars thou sowest whose harvest dares  
 Promise the earth to countershine  
 Whatever makes Heaven's forehead fine

Every morn from hence  
 A brisk cherub something sips  
 Whose soft influence  
 Adds sweetness to his sweetest lips  
 Then to his music and his song  
 Tastes of this breakfast all day long

When some new guest  
 Takes up among the stairs a room  
 And Heaven will make a feast  
 Angels with their bottles come,  
 And draw from these full eyes of thine  
 Their Master's water, their own wine

The dew no more will weep  
 The primrose's pale cheek to deck  
 The dew no more will sleep  
 Nuzzled in the lily's neck  
 Much rather would it tremble here  
 And leave them both to be thy tear

When sorrow would be seen  
 In her brightest majesty  
 —For she is a Queen—  
 Then is she dressed by none but thee  
 Then and only then she wears  
 Her richest pearls—I mean thy tears

35

Not in the evenings eyes  
 When they red with weeping are  
 For the Sun that dies  
 Sits Sorrow with a face so fair  
 Nowhere but here did ever meet  
 Sweetness so sad sadness so sweet

Does the night arise?  
 Still thy tears do fall and fall  
 Does night lose her eyes?  
 Still the fountain weeps for all  
 Let day and night do what they will  
 Thou hast thy task, thou weepst still

Not *So long she lived*  
 Will thy tomb report of thee  
 But *So long she grieved*,  
 Thus must we date thy memory  
 Others by days by months by years  
 Measure their ages thou by tears

45

Say ye bright brothers  
 The fugitive sons of those fair eyes  
 Your fruitful mothers,  
 What make you here? What hopes can tice  
 You to be born? What cause can borrow  
 You from those nests of noble sorrow?

50

55

60

Whither away so fast  
 For sune the sordid earth  
 Your sweetness cannot taste,  
 Nor does the dust deserve your birth  
 Sweet, whither waste you then? O say  
 Why you trip so fast away

65

*We go not to seek  
 The darlings of Aurora's bed,  
 The rose's modest cheek,  
 Nor the violet's humble head  
 No such thing we go to meet  
 A worthier object—our Lord's feet*

70

## A Child Asleep

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

### I

How he sleepeth having drunken  
 Weary childhood's mandragore!

From his pretty eyes have sunken  
 Pleasures to make room for more—  
 Sleeping near the withered nosegay which he pulled  
 the day before

5

### II

Nosegays! leave them for the taking  
 Throw them earthward where they grew  
 Dim are such beside the breaking  
 Amaranths he looks unto  
 Folded eyes see brighter colours than the open ever  
 do

10

### III

Heaven flowers rayed by shadows golden  
 From the palms they sprang beneath,  
 Now perhaps divinely holden  
 Swing against him in a wreath  
 We may think so from the quickening of his bloom  
 and of his breath

15

### IV

Vision unto vision calleth  
 While the young child dreameth on,  
 Fair O dreamer! thee befalleth  
 With the glory thou has won!  
 Darker wert thou in the garden yester morn by  
 summer sun

20

### V

We should see the spirits ringing  
 Round thee, were the clouds away  
 'Tis the child heart draws them singing  
 In the silent-seeming clay  
 Singing!—stars that seem the mutest, go in music all  
 the way

25

### VI

As the moths around a taper  
 As the bees around a rose,  
 As the gnats around a vapour,  
 So the spirits group and close  
 Round about a holy childhood, as if drinking its  
 repose

30

### VII

Shapes of brightness overlean thee  
 Flash their diadems of youth  
 On the ringlets which half screen thee  
 While thou smilest not in sooth  
 Thy smile but the overfair one, dropt from some  
 ethereal mouth

35



## VIII

Haply it is angels duty,  
 During slumber shade by shade,  
 To find down this childish beauty  
 To the thing it must be made  
 Ere the world shall bring its praises, or the tomb  
 shall see it fade 40

## IX

Softly softly! make no noises!  
 Now he lieth dead and dumb  
 Now he hears the angels voices  
 Folding silence in the room,  
 Now he muses deep the meaning of the Heaven  
 words as they come 45

## X

Speak not! he is consecrated,  
 Breathe no breath across his eyes  
 Lifted up and separated  
 On the hand of God he lies  
 In a sweetness beyond touching—held in cloistral  
 sanctities 50

## XI

Could ye bless him—father—mother,  
 Bless the dimple in his cheek?  
 Dare ye look at one another  
 And the benediction speak?  
 Would ye not break out in weeping and confess  
 yourselves too weak? 55

## XII

He is harmless—ye are sinful,  
 Ye are trouble—he at ease  
 From his slumber, virtue winful  
 Floweth outward with increase  
 Dare not bless him! but be blessed by his peace—  
 and go in peace 60

## The Female Friend

CORNELIUS WHUR

In this imperfect gloomy scene  
 Of complicated ill,  
 How rarely is a day serene  
 The throbbing bosom still!  
 Will not a beauteous landscape bright 5  
 Or music's soothing sound  
 Console the heart afford delight  
 And throw sweet peace around?

They may, but never comfort lend  
 Like an accomplish'd female friend! 10

With such a friend the social hour  
 In sweetest pleasure glides  
 There is in female charms a power  
 Which lastingly abides  
 The fragrance of the blushing rose, 15  
 Its tints and splendid hue  
 Will with the season decompose  
 And pass as fitting dew  
 On firmer ties his joys depend  
 Who has a faithful female friend! 20

As orbs revolve, and years recede  
 And seasons onward roll,  
 The fancy may on beauties feed  
 With discontented soul  
 A thousand objects bright and fair 25  
 May for a moment shine  
 Yet many a sigh and many a tear  
 But mark their swift decline  
 While lasting joys the man attend  
 Who has a polish'd female friend! 30

## Mechanophilus

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

(IN THE TIME OF THE FIRST RAILWAYS)

Now first we stand and understand  
 And sunder false from true,  
 And handle boldly with the hand  
 And see and shape and do

Dash back that ocean with a pier 5  
 Strow yonder mountain flat  
 A railway there, a tunnel here,  
 Mix me this Zone with that!

Bring me my horse—my horse? my wings  
 That I may soar the sky, 10  
 For Thought into the outward springs  
 I find her with the eye

O will she moonlike, sway the man,  
 And bring or chase the storm,  
 Who was a shadow in the brain, 15  
 And is a living form?

Far as the future vaults her skies  
 From these my vantage ground  
 To those still working energies  
 I spy not term nor bound 20

As we surpass our father's skill,  
 Our sons will shame our own  
 A thousand things are hidden still  
 And not a hundred known

And had some prophet spoken true  
 Of all we shall achieve  
 The wonders were so wildly new,  
 That no man would believe

Meanwhile my brothers work and wield  
 The forces of to day  
 And plow the Present like a field  
 And garner all you may!

You what the cultured surface grows,  
 Dispense with careful hands  
 Deep under deep for ever goes  
 Heaven over heaven expands

## Say Not the Struggle Nought Availeth

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

Say not the struggle nought availeth,  
 The labor and the wounds are vain,  
 The enemy faints not, nor faileth  
 And as things have been they remain

If hopes were dupes fears may be liars  
 It may be, in yon smoke concealed  
 Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,  
 And but for you, possess the field

For while the tired waves vainly breaking,  
 Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
 Far back through creeks and inlets making,  
 Comes silent, flooding in the main

And not by eastern windows only  
 When daylight comes comes in the light  
 In front the sun climbs slow how slowly  
 But westward look, the land is bright

## The Raven

EDGAR ALLAN POE

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered,  
 weak and weary,  
 Over many quaint and curious volume of forgotten  
 lore—

While I nodded nearly napping suddenly there  
 came a tapping  
 As of some one gently rapping rapping at my cham-  
 ber door

25 Tis some visitor I muttered tapping at my  
 chamber door—  
 Only this and nothing more

Ah distinctly I remember it was in the bleak Decem-  
 ber  
 And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost  
 30 upon the floor  
 Eagerly I wished the morrow—vainly I had sought  
 to borrow  
 From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the  
 lost Lenore—  
 35 For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels  
 name Lenore—  
 Nameless *here* for evermore

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple  
 curtain  
 Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never  
 felt before  
 So that now to still the beating of my heart I stood  
 repeating,  
 15 Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my cham-  
 ber door—  
 Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber  
 door —  
 This it is and nothing more

5 Presently my soul grew stronger hesitating then no  
 longer  
 Su said I or Madam truly your forgiveness I  
 implore,  
 20 But the fact is I was napping and so gently you  
 came rapping  
 And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my  
 chamber door,  
 That I scarce was sure I heard you—here I opened  
 wide the door —  
 Darkness there and nothing more

Deep into that darkness peering long I stood there  
 wondering fearing,  
 25 Doubting dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to  
 dream before  
 But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave  
 no token,  
 And the only word there spoken was the whispered  
 word Lenore  
 This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the  
 word, Lenore?  
 29 Merely this and nothing more

Back into the chamber turning all my soul within  
me burning  
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than  
before

Surely said I surely that is something at my  
window lattice  
Let me see, then what thereat is and this mystery  
explore—  
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery  
explore,—<sup>35</sup>  
Tis the wind and nothing more!

Open here I flung the shutter when with many a  
flirt and flutter  
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days  
of yore

Not the least obeisance made he not a minute  
stopped or stayed he  
But with mien of lord or lady, perched above my  
chamber door—<sup>40</sup>  
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my cham-  
ber door—  
Perched and sat and nothing more

Then this ebony bud beguiling my sad fancy into  
smiling,  
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance  
it wore

Though thy crest be shorn and shaven thou I  
said art sure no craven<sup>45</sup>  
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the  
Nightly shore—  
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's  
Plutonian shore!

Quoth the Raven Nevermore

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear dis-  
course so plainly,  
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy  
bore<sup>50</sup>

For we cannot help agreeing that no living human  
being  
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his  
chamber door—  
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his  
chamber door

With such name as Nevermore

But the Raven sitting lonely on that placid bust,  
spoke only<sup>55</sup>  
That one word as if his soul in that one word he  
did outpour

Nothing farther then he uttered—not a feather then  
he fluttered—  
Till I scarcely more than muttered Other friends  
have flown before—

On the morrow *he* will leave me as my Hopes have  
flown before<sup>59</sup>  
Then the bird said Nevermore

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly  
spoken  
Doubtless said I, what it utters is its only stock  
and store  
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful  
Disaster  
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one  
burden bore—  
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden  
bore<sup>65</sup>  
Of Never—nevermore

But the Raven still beguiling all my sad fancy into  
smiling  
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird  
and bust and door  
Then upon the velvet sinking I betook myself to  
linking  
Fancy unto fancy thinking what this ominous bud  
of yore—<sup>70</sup>  
What this grim ungainly, ghastly gaunt and omi-  
nous bird of yore  
Meant in croaking Nevermore

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable  
expressing  
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my  
bosom's core  
This and more I sat divining with my head at ease  
reclining<sup>75</sup>  
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light  
gloated o'er,  
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light  
gloating o'er,  
*She* shall press ah, nevermore!

Then methought, the air grew denser perfumed  
from an unseen censer  
Swung by seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the  
tufted floor<sup>80</sup>  
Wretch I cried, thy God hath lent thee—by these  
angels he hath sent thee  
Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories  
of Lenore  
Quaff oh, quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this  
lost Lenore!

Quoth the Raven Nevermore

Prophet! said I, thing of evil!—prophet still if  
bird or devil!—<sup>85</sup>  
Whether Tempter sent or whether tempest tossed  
thee here ashore

Desolate, yet all undaunted on this desert land  
enchanted—

On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly I  
implore—

Is there—is there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me  
I implore!<sup>89</sup>

Quoth the Raven Nevermore

Prophet! said I thing of evil!—prophet still if  
bird or devil!

By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God  
we both adore—

Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant  
Ardenn,

It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels  
name Lenore—

Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels  
name Lenore<sup>95</sup>

Quoth the Raven Nevermore

Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend! I  
shrieked upstarting—

Get thee back into the tempest and the Nights  
Plutonian shore!

Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy  
soul hath spoken!

Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above  
my door!<sup>100</sup>

Take thy beak from out my heart and take thy  
form from off my door!

Quoth the Raven, Nevermore

And the Raven never flitting still is sitting *still* is  
sitting

On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber  
door

And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that  
is dreaming<sup>105</sup>

And the lamp light o'er him streaming throws his  
shadow on the floor

And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating  
on the floor

Shall be lifted—nevermore!

## The Philosophy of Composition\*

*Edgar Allan Poe*

*The Raven* is surely one of the most popular of American poems for many readers it represents what a poem really ought to be musical rhythmical figurative full of tricky

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rhymes and irregularly spaced lines non ideological but with a touch of melancholic sentimentality emotive at mospheric But few of these readers realize that *The Raven* is a poem virtually written to order In *The Philosophy of Composition* Poe candidly lays bare the considerations which prompted him to write the poem and lists the devices by which it was fabricated In short *The Raven* was written to exemplify the poetical principles which Poe held and which he set down both in *The Philosophy of Composition* and in *The Poetic Principle* the latter of which begins with the forthright statement I hold that a long poem does not exist I maintain that the phrase a long poem is simply a flat contradiction in terms Summing up Poe declares I would define in brief the Poetry of words as THE RHYTHMICAL CREATION OF BEAUTY Its sole arbiter is Taste With the Intellect or with the Conscience it has only collateral relations Unless incidentally it has no concern whatever either with Duty or with Truth

Poe then would have us judge the poem in terms of its ability to come up to his notions of what a poem should be But this demand raises vital critical questions What if the principles are fallacious to start with? Or if the principles are sound what if the poem turns out to be poor despite its adherence to these principles? Conversely what if the principles are wrong but the poem turns out to be good in spite of them? Moreover do Poes poetical principles exhaust all the meanings implicit in a poem? What if *The Raven* contains ideas and attitudes and feelings of which Poe himself was unaware but which literary scholarship and psycho analysis can show to be present?

We are asking these fundamental questions Has the poet's ostensible and avowed intentions any real relevance to our understanding of his poetry? Does the success or failure of a poem rest on the validity of the poetical theory from which it stems? Are there permanent values and therefore permanent criteria by which poems of all times and all places may be judged or are our judgments in the long run determined by changes in taste rather than by permanent principles? Must a poem spring out of real emotions and attitudes genuinely held or is technique more important than conviction?

These questions are applicable not only to poetry but to all literature The means for answering them are contained in the texts reprinted here Note that we say that the means for answering are available not that the answers are In a sense and in conclusion literature deals not with answers but with questions

LET US dismiss as irrelevant to the poem *per se* the circumstance—or say the necessity—which in the first place gave rise to the intention of composing a poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste

We commence, then with this intention

The initial consideration was that of extent If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting

we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression—for if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere and every thing like totality is at once destroyed. But since *ceteris paribus* no poet can afford to dispense with *any thing* that may advance his design it but remains to be seen whether there is in extent any advantage to counterbalance the loss of unity which attends it. Here I say no at once. What we term a long poem is in fact merely a succession of brief ones—that is to say of brief poetical effects. It is needless to demonstrate that a poem is such only inasmuch as it intensely excites by elevating the soul and all intense excitements are through a psychal necessity brief. For this reason at least one half of the *Paradise Lost* is essentially prose—a succession of poetical excitement interspersed *inevitably* with corresponding depressions—the whole being deprived through the extremeness of its length of the vastly important artistic element totality or unity of effect.

It appears evident then that there is a distinct limit as regards length to all works of literary art—the limit of a single sitting—and that although in certain classes of prose composition such as *Robinson Crusoe* (demanding no unity,) this limit may be advantageously overpassed it can never properly be overpassed in a poem. Within this limit the extent of a poem may be made to bear mathematical relation to its merit—in other words to the excitement or elevation—again, in other words to the degree of the true poetical effect which it is capable of inducing for it is clear that the brevity must be in direct ratio of the intensity of the intended effect—thus, with one proviso—that a certain degree of duration is absolutely requisite for the production of any effect at all.

Holding in view these considerations as well as that degree of excitement which I deemed not above the popular, while not below the critical, taste, I reached at once what I conceived the proper *length* for my intended poem—a length of about one hundred lines. It is, in fact, a hundred and eight.

My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect to be conveyed and here I may as well observe that throughout the construction I kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work *universally* appreciable. I should be carried too far out of my immediate topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted and which with the poetical stands not in the slightest need of demonstration—the point, I mean that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem. A few words however in elucidation of my real meaning, which some of my friends have evinced a disposition to misrepresent. That pleasure which is at once the most intense the most elevating, and

the most pure is I believe found in the contemplation of the beautiful. When indeed men speak of Beauty, they mean precisely not a quality as is supposed but an effect—they refer in short just to that intense and pure elevation of *soul*—not of intellect or of heart—upon which I have commented and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating the beautiful. Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes—that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment—no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to is *most readily* attained in the poem. Now the object, Truth or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion or the excitement of the heart are although attainable to a certain extent in poetry far more readily attainable in prose. Truth in fact demands a precision and Passion a *homeliness* (the truly passionate will comprehend me) which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which I maintain, is the excitement or pleasurable elevation of the soul. It by no means follows from any thing here said that passion or even truth may not be introduced and even profitably introduced into a poem—for they may serve in elucidation, or aid the general effect as do discords in music by contrast—but the true artist will always contrive, first to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim, and secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem.

Regarding then Beauty as my province my next question referred to the *tone* of its highest manifestation—and all experience has shown that this tone is one of *sadness*. Beauty of whatever kind in its supreme development invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.

The length, the province and the tone, being thus determined I betook myself to ordinary induction with the view of obtaining some artistic piquancy which might serve me as a keynote in the construction of the poem—some pivot upon which the whole structure might turn. In carefully thinking over all the usual artistic effects—or more properly *points* in the theatrical sense—I did not fail to perceive immediately that no one had been so universally employed as that of the *refrain*. The universality of its employment sufficed to assure me of its intrinsic value and spared me the necessity of submitting it to analysis. I considered it however, with regard to its susceptibility of improvements and soon saw it to be in a primitive condition. As commonly used the *refrain*, or burden not only is limited to lyric verse, but depends for its impression upon the

force of monotone—both in sound and thought The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity—of repetition I resolved to diversify, and so heighten the effect by adhering in general to the monotone of sound, while I continually varied that of thought that is to say, I determined to produce continuously novel effects by the variation of *the application of the refrain*—the *refrain* itself remaining for the most part unvaried

These points being settled I next bethought me of the *nature* of my *refrain* Since its application was to be repeatedly varied, it was clear that the *refrain* itself must be brief for there would have been an insurmountable difficulty in frequent variations of application in any sentence of length In proportion to the brevity of the sentence would of course be the facility of the variation This led me at once to a single word as the best *refrain*

The question now arose as to the *character* of the word Having made up my mind to a *refrain* the division of the poem into stanzas was of course a corollary the *refrain* forming the close of each stanza That such a close to have force must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt and these considerations inevitably led me to the long *o* as the most sonorous vowel, in connection with *r* as the most producible consonant

The sound of the *refrain* being thus determined it became necessary to select a word embodying this sound and at the same time in the fullest possible keeping with that melancholy which I had pre-determined as the tone of the poem In such a search it would have been absolutely impossible to overlook the word *Nevermore* In fact, it was the very first which presented itself

The next *desideratum* was a pretext for the continuous use of the one word *nevermore* In observing the difficulty which I at once found in inventing a sufficiently plausible reason for its continuous repetition I did not fail to perceive that this difficulty arose solely from the pre-assumption that the word was to be so continuously or monotonously spoken by a *human* being—I did not fail to perceive, in short, that the difficulty lay in the reconciliation of this monotony with the exercise of reason on the part of the creature repeating the word Here then, immediately arose the idea of a *non-reasoning* creature capable of speech and very naturally a parrot in the first instance, suggested itself but was superseded forthwith by a Raven as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended *tone*

I had now gone so far as the conception of a Raven—the bird of ill omen—monotonously repeating the one word *Nevermore* at the conclusion of each stanza, in a poem of melancholy tone and

in length about one hundred lines Now never losing sight of the object *supremeness* or perfection at all points I asked myself—Of all melancholy topics what according to the *universal* understanding of mankind is the *most* melancholy? Death—was the obvious reply And when I said is this most melancholy of topics most poetical? From what I have already explained at some length the answer here also is obvious—When it most closely allies itself to *Beauty* the death, then of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world—and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover

I had now to combine the two ideas of a lover lamenting his deceased mistress and a Raven continuously repeating the word *Nevermore*—I had to combine these bearing in mind my design of varying at every turn the *application* of the word repeated but the only intelligible mode of such combination is that of imagining the Raven employing the word in answer to the queries of the lover And here it was that I saw at once the opportunity afforded for the effect on which I had been depending—that is to say the effect of the *variation of application* I saw that I could make the first query propounded by the lover—the first query to which the Raven should reply *Nevermore*—that I could make this first query a commonplace one—the second less so—the third still less and so on—until at length the lover startled from his original *nonchalance* by the melancholy character of the word itself—by its frequent repetition—and by a consideration of the ominous reputation of the fowl that uttered it—is at length excited to superstition and wildly propounds queries of a far different character—queries whose solution he has passionately at heart—propounds them half in superstition and half in that species of despair which delights in self torture—propounds them not altogether because he believes in the prophetic or demoniac character of the bird (which reason assures him is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote) but because he experiences a frenzied pleasure in so modeling his questions as to receive from the *expected* *Nevermore* the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrow Perceiving the opportunity thus afforded me—or, more strictly thus forced upon me in the process of the construction—I first established in mind the climax or concluding query—that query to which *Nevermore* should be in the last place an answer—that query in reply to which this word *Nevermore* should involve the uttermost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair

Here then the poem may be said to have its beginning—at the end where all works of art should begin—for it was here at this point of my preconsidera

tions that I first put pen to paper in the composition of the stanza

Prophet said I thing of evil' prophet still if bird or  
 devil'  
 By that heaven that bends above us—by that God we  
 both adore  
 Tell this soul with sorrow laden if within the distant  
 Aidenn  
 It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name  
 Lenore—  
 Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name  
 Lenore

Quoth the Raven Nevermore

I composed this stanza at this point first that by establishing the climax I might the better vary and graduate as regards seriousness and importance, the preceding queries of the lover—and secondly, that I might definitely settle the rhythm the metre and the length and general arrangement of the stanza—as well as graduate the stanzas which were to precede, so that none of them might surpass this in rhythmical effect. Had I been able in the subsequent composition to construct more vigorous stanzas I should, without scruple have purposely enfeebled them so as not to interfere with the climacteric effect.

And here I may as well say a few words of the versification. My first object (as usual) was originality. The extent to which this has been neglected, in versification is one of the most unaccountable things in the world. Admitting that there is little possibility of variety in mere *rhythm* it is still clear that the possible varieties of metre and stanza are absolutely infinite—and yet, *for centuries, no man in verse, has ever done or ever seemed to think of doing an original thing*. The fact is that originality (unless in minds of very unusual force) is by no means a matter as some suppose, of impulse or intuition. In general to be found, it must be elaborately sought and although a positive merit of the highest class demands in its attainment less of invention than negation.

Of course, I pretend to no originality in either the rhythm or metre of the Raven. The former is trochaic—the latter is octameter acatalectic alternating with heptameter catalectic repeated in the refrain of the fifth verse and terminating with tetrameter catalectic. Less pedantically—the feet employed throughout (trochees) consist of a long syllable followed by a short the first line of the stanza consists of eight of these feet—the second of seven and a half (in effect two-thirds)—the third of eight—the fourth of seven and a half—the fifth the same—the sixth three and a half. Now each of these lines taken individually has been employed before and what originality the Raven has is in their *combination into stanza* nothing even remotely

approaching this combination has ever been attempted. The effect of this originality of combination is aided by other unusual and some altogether novel effects arising from an extension of the application of the principles of rhyme and alliteration.

The next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the Raven—and the first branch of this consideration was the *locale*. For this the most natural suggestion might seem to be a forest or the fields—but it has always appeared to me that a close *circumscription of space* is absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident—it has the force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the attention and of course, must not be confounded with mere unity of place.

I determined then to place the lover in his chamber—in a chamber rendered sacred to him by memories of her who had frequented it. The room is represented as richly furnished—this in mere pursuance of the ideas I have already explained on the subject of Beauty as the sole true poetical thesis.

The *locale* being thus determined, I had now to introduce the bird—and the thought of introducing him through the window was inevitable. The idea of making the lover suppose in the first instance that the flapping of the wings of the bird against the shutter is a tapping at the door, originated in a wish to increase by prolonging, the reader's curiosity, and in a desire to admit the incidental effect arising from the lover's throwing open the door, finding all dark and thence adopting the half-fancy that it was the spirit of his mistress that knocked.

I made the night tempestuous first to account for the Raven's seeking admission and secondly for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity within the chamber.

I made the bird alight on the bust of Pallas also for the effect of contrast between the marble and the plumage—it being understood that the bust was absolutely *suggested* by the bird—the bust of *Pallas* being chosen first as most in keeping with the scholarship of the lover, and, secondly for the sonorousness of the word *Pallas* itself.

About the middle of the poem also I have availed myself of the force of contrast with a view of deepening the ultimate impression. For example in air of the fantastic—approaching as nearly to the ludicrous as was admissible—is given to the Raven's entrance. He comes in with many a flirt and flutter.

Not the *least obeisance made* he—not a moment stopped  
 or stayed he  
*But with mien of lord or lady* perched above my chamber  
 door

In the two stanzas which follow, the design is more obviously carried out—



Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling  
By the *grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore*

Though thy *crest be shorn and shaven* thou I said  
art sure no craven  
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the  
nightly shore—

Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian  
shore?

Quoth the Raven Nevermore

Much I marvelled *this ungainly fowl* to hear discourse  
so plainly

Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore  
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being  
*Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—*

*Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door*

With such name as Nevermore

The effect of the *denouement* being thus provided  
for I immediately drop the fantastic for a tone of  
the most profound seriousness—this tone commencing  
in the stanza directly following the one last  
quoted with the line,

But the Raven sitting lonely on that placid bust spoke  
only etc

From this epoch the lover no longer jests—no  
longer sees any thing even of the fantastic in the  
Raven's demeanor. He speaks of him as a grim,  
ungainly, ghastly gaunt, and ominous bird of yore,  
and feels the fiery eyes burning into his bosom's  
core. This revolution of thought or fancy on the  
lover's part is intended to induce a similar one on  
the part of the reader—to bring the mind into a  
proper frame for the *denouement*—which is now  
brought about as rapidly and as *directly* as possible.

With the *denouement* proper—with the Raven's  
reply. Nevermore, to the lover's final demand if  
he shall meet his mistress in another world—the  
poem in its obvious phase, that of a simple narrative,  
may be said to have its completion. So far, every  
thing is within the limits of the accountable—of the  
real. A raven, having learned by rote the single word  
Nevermore, and having escaped from the custody  
of its owner, is driven at midnight, through the  
violence of a storm, to seek admission at a window  
from which a light still gleams—the chamber-win-  
dow of a student occupied half in poring over a  
volume, half in dreaming of a beloved mistress  
deceased. The casement being thrown open at the  
fluttering of the bird's wings, the bird itself perches  
on the most convenient seat out of the immediate  
reach of the student who, amused by the incident  
and the oddity of the visitor's demeanor demands  
of it in jest and without looking for a reply, its name

The raven addressed answers with its customary  
word Nevermore—a word which finds immediate  
echo in the melancholy heart of the student who  
giving utterance aloud to certain thoughts suggested  
by the occasion is again startled by the fowl's repe-  
tition of Nevermore. The student now guesses the  
state of the case, but is impelled as I have before  
explained by the human thirst for self torture and  
in part by superstition to propound such queries to  
the bird as will bring him the lover, the most of  
the luxury of sorrow through the anticipated answer  
Nevermore. With the indulgence, to the extreme  
of this self torture the narration, in what I have  
termed its first or obvious phase, has a natural termi-  
nation, and so far there has been no overstepping of  
the limits of the real.

But in subjects so handled, however skilfully, or  
with however vivid an array of incident there is  
always a certain hardness or nakedness, which repels  
the artistical eye. Two things are invariably required  
—first some amount of complexity or more properly  
adaptation and, secondly some amount of sugges-  
tiveness—some under-current however indefinite  
of meaning. It is this latter in especial which im-  
parts to a work of art so much of that *richness* (to  
borrow from colloquy a forcible term) which we  
are too fond of confounding with the *ideal*. It is the  
*excess* of the suggested meaning—it is the rendering  
this the upper instead of the under current of the  
theme—which turns into prose (and that of the  
very flattest kind) the so called poetry of the so  
called transcendentalists.

Holding these opinions I added the two conclud-  
ing stanzas of the poem—their suggestiveness being  
thus made to pervade all the narrative which has  
preceded them. The under-current of meaning is  
rendered first apparent in the lines—

Take thy beak from out *my heart* and take thy form  
from off my door!

Quoth the Raven Nevermore!

It will be observed that the words, from out my  
heart, involve the first metaphorical expression in  
the poem. They with the answer, Nevermore dis-  
pose the mind to seek a moral in all that has been  
previously narrated. The reader begins now to regard  
the Raven as emblematical—but it is not until the  
very last line of the very last stanza that the inten-  
tion of making him emblematical of *Mournful and*  
*Never-ending Remembrance* is permitted distinctly  
to be seen.

And the Raven never fitting still is sitting still is sitting  
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door  
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is  
dreaming

And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow  
on the floor  
And my soul *from out that shadow* that lies floating on  
the floor

Shall be lifted—nevermore



## *The Lord Is My Shepherd Man and God*

What shall a man do to be saved? Batter my heart cries  
Donne in his anguish for he knows that until he suffers,  
he cannot face his God therefore

Divorce me untie or break that knot again  
Take me to you imprison me for I  
Except you enthrall me never shall be free  
Nor ever chaste except you ravish me

This same paradox which Donne had expressed in his convoluted broken style Herbert spoke of in his characteristic modest almost colloquial way the best of men stumbles at a pin yet of all sinners he himself is the worst sick tossed vessel dashing on each thing The eye of Blake saw through the pretenses of all human institutions here is his view of the church as a social organization drawn with the same startling invention and innocence of his water colors It is perhaps unfair to the older and orthodox Wordsworth to include his Tintern Abbey in a section on religious poetry yet there is no question that the depth of religious sentiment in his early pantheism was of the highest order and spiritual value for nothing in his later religious verse can match the sublimity of these lines

And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns  
And the round ocean and the living air  
And the blue sky and in the mind of man  
A motion and a spirit that impels  
All thinking things all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things

This passage is one of the noblest heights of the language and surely assures Wordsworth's rank among the first poets in English All the winds of doctrine which swept through the religious thought of the nineteenth century—and they were bitter and swirling winds—sweep through Browning's unforgettable dramatic monologue Bishop Blougram's Apology which is a fascinating picture not so much of a man as of a mind or rather of an attitude of mind

We conclude with the almost diametrically opposed views of Hardy and Hopkins

## Batter My Heart

JOHN DONNE

Batter my heart three personed God for you  
As yet but knock breathe shine and seek to mend  
That I may rise and stand overthrow me and bend  
Your force to break, blow, burn and make me new  
I like an usurped town, to another due 5  
Labour to admit you but Oh to no end  
Reason your viceroy in me me should defend  
But is captived and proves weak or untrue

Yet dearly I love you and would be loved fain  
But am betrothed unto your enemy 10  
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,  
Take me to you imprison me for I  
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me

## Psalm Twenty-Three

THE HOLY BIBLE

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures,  
He leadeth me beside the still waters  
He restoreth my soul  
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness 5  
for his name's sake  
Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow  
of death  
I will fear no evil, for thou art with me  
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me  
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence  
of mine enemies  
Thou anointest my head with oil my cup runneth 10  
over  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the  
days of my life,  
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever

## Misery

GEORGE HERBERT

Lord let the angels praise thy name  
Man is a foolish thing a foolish thing  
Folly and sin play all his game  
His house still burns, and yet he still doth sing 5  
*Man is but grass,  
He knows it fill the glass*

How canst thou brook his foolishness?  
 Why he'll not lose a cup of drink for thee  
 Bid him but temper his excess  
 Not he he knows where he can better be 10  
*As he will swear*  
*Than to serve thee in fear*

What strange pollutions doth he wed  
 And make his own? as if none knew but he  
 No man shall beat into his head 15  
 That thou within his curtains drawn canst see  
*They are of cloth*  
*Where never yet came moth*

The best of men, turn but thy hand  
 For one poor minute, stumble at a pin 20  
 They would not have their actions scanned,  
 Nor any sorrow tell them that they sin  
*Though it be small*  
*And measure not their fall*

They quarrel thee, and would give over 25  
 The bargain made to serve thee but thy love  
 Holds them unto it and doth cover  
 Their follies with the wing of thy mild dove  
*Not suffering those*  
*Who would to be thy foes* 30

My God Man cannot praise thy name  
 Thou art all brightness, perfect purity  
 The sun holds down his head for shame  
 Dead with eclipses, when we speak of thee 35  
*How shall infection*  
*Presume on thy perfection?*

As duty hands foul all they touch  
 And those things most which are most pure and fine  
 So our clay hearts, even when we crouch  
 To sing thy praises, make them less divine 40  
*Yet either this,*  
*Or none thy portion is*

Man cannot serve thee let him go  
 And serve the swine there, there is his delight  
 He doth not like this virtue, no 45  
 Give him his dirt to wallow in all night  
*These preachers make*  
*His head to shoot and ache*

Oh foolish man! where are thine eyes?  
 How hast thou lost them in a crowd of cares? 50  
 Thou pullest the rug and wilt not rise  
 No, not to purchase the whole pack of stars  
*There let them shine*  
*Thou must go sleep, or dine*

The bird that sees a dainty bower 55  
 Made in the tree where she was wont to sit  
 Wonders and sings, but not his power  
 Who made the arbour this exceeds her wit  
*But Man doth know* 59  
*The spring whence all things flow*

And yet as though he knew it not  
 His knowledge winks and lets his humours reign  
 They make his life a constant blot  
 And all the blood of God to run in vain  
*Ah wretch! what verse* 65  
*Can thy strange ways rehearse?*

Indeed at first Man was a treasure  
 A box of jewels shop of rarities  
 A ring whose posy was *My pleasure*,  
 He was a garden in a paradise 70  
*Glory and grace*  
*Did crown his heart and face*

But sin hath fooled him Now he is  
 A lump of flesh without a foot or wing  
 To raise him to a glimpse of bliss 75  
 A sick tossed vessel dashing on each thing  
*Nay his own shelf*  
*My God, I mean my self*

## Tintern Abbey

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY,  
 ON REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE  
 DURING A TOUR JULY 13 1798

Five years have past five summers, with the length  
 Of five long winters! and again I hear  
 These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs  
 With a soft inland murmur —Once again  
 Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs 5  
 That on a wild secluded scene impress  
 Thoughts of more deep seclusion and connect  
 The landscape with the quiet of the sky  
 The day is come when I again repose 10  
 Here, under this dark sycamore and view  
 These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard tufts,  
 Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,  
 Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves  
 Mid groves and copses Once again I see  
 These hedge rows hardly hedge rows little lines 15  
 Of sportive wood run wild these pastoral farms  
 Green to the very door and wreaths of smoke  
 Sent up in silence from among the trees!  
 With some uncertain notice, as might seem  
 Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods 20

Of some Hermit's cave where by his fire  
The Hermit sits alone

These beauteous forms  
Through a long absence have not been to me  
As is a landscape to blind man's eye  
But oft in lonely rooms and mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,  
And passing even into my purer mind  
With tranquil restoration—feelings too  
Of unremembered pleasure such, perhaps,  
As have no slight or trivial influence  
On that best portion of a good man's life  
His little nameless unremembered acts  
Of kindness and of love Nor less, I trust  
To them I may have owed another gift,  
Of aspect more sublime that blessed mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened—that serene and blessed mood  
In which the affections gently lead us on,—  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things

If this  
Be but a vain belief, yet oh! how oft—  
In darkness and amid the many shapes  
Of joyless daylight when the fretful stir  
Unprofitable and the fever of the world,  
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—  
How oft in spirit have I turned to thee  
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,  
How often has my spirit turned to thee!  
And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,  
With many recognitions dim and faint,  
And somewhat of a sad perplexity  
The picture of the mind revives again  
While here I stand not only with the sense  
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
That in this moment there is life and food  
For future years And so I dare to hope,  
Though changed, no doubt from what I was when  
first

I came among these hills, when like a roe  
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
Wherever nature led more like a man  
Flying from something that he dreads than one  
Who sought the thing he loved For nature then  
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days  
And their glad animal movements all gone by)

To me was all in all—I cannot paint  
What then I was The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion the tall rock  
The mountain and the deep and gloomy wood  
Their colours and their forms were then to me  
An appetite a feeling and a love  
That had no need of a remoter charm,  
By thought supplied nor any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye—That time is past,  
And all its aching joys are now no more  
And all its dizzy raptures Not for this  
Faint I nor mourn nor murmur other gifts  
Have followed for such loss I would believe  
Abundant recompense For I have learned  
To look on nature not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth but hearing oftentimes  
The still sad music of humanity  
Nor harsh nor grating though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things all objects of all thought  
And rolls through all things Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods  
And mountains, and of all that we behold  
From this green earth of all the mighty world  
Of eye and ear—both what they half create,  
And what perceive well pleased to recognise  
In nature and the language of the sense  
The anchor of my purest thoughts the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart and soul  
Of all my moral being

Nor perchance,  
If I were not thus taught, should I the more  
Suffer my genial spirits to decay  
For thou art with me here upon the banks  
Of this fair river thou my dearest Friend  
My dear, dear Friend and in thy voice I catch  
The language of my former heart and read  
My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
Of thy wild eyes Oh! yet a little while  
May I behold in thee what I was once  
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,  
Knowing that Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her tis her privilege,  
Though all the years of this our life to lead  
From joy to joy for she can so inform  
The mind that is within us, so impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
Rash judgments nor the sneers of selfish men  
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all

The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
 Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
 Our cheerful faith that all which we behold  
 Is full of blessings Therefore let the moon  
 Shine on thee in thy solitary walk  
 And let the misty mountain winds be free  
 To blow against thee and, in after years,  
 When these wild ecstasies shall be matured  
 Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind  
 Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,  
 Thy memory be as a dwelling-place  
 For all sweet sounds and harmonies, oh! then,  
 If solitude or fear or pain or grief  
 Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts  
 Of tender joy wilt thou remember me  
 And these my exhortations! Nor perchance—  
 If I should be where I no more can hear  
 Thy voice nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams  
 Of past existence—wilt thou then forget  
 That on the banks of this delightful stream  
 We stood together, and that I so long  
 A worshipper of Nature hither came  
 Unwearied in that service rather say  
 With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal  
 Of holier love Nor wilt thou then forget  
 That after many wanderings, many years  
 Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,  
 And this green pastoral landscape were to me  
 More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

## I Saw a Chapel All of Gold

WILLIAM BLAKE

I saw a Chapel all of gold  
 That none did dare to enter in,  
 And many weeping stood without,  
 Weeping mourning, worshipping

I saw a Serpent rise between  
 The white pillars of the door  
 And he forc'd and forc'd and forc'd,  
 Down the golden hinges tore

And along the pavement sweet  
 Set with pearls and rubies bright,  
 All his shining length he drew,  
 Till upon the altar white

Vomiting his poison out  
 On the Bread and on the Wine  
 So I turned into a sty,  
 And laid me down among the swine

## Bishop Blougram's Apology

ROBERT BROWNING

No more wine? Then we'll push back chairs and  
 talk  
 A final glass for me though, cool faith!  
 We ought to have our Abbey back you see  
 It's different preaching in basilicas  
 And doing duty in some masterpiece  
 Like this of brother Pugin's bless his heart!  
 I doubt if they're half baked those chalk rosettes,  
 Ciphers and stucco twiddlings everywhere  
 It's just like breathing in a lime kiln eh?  
 These hot long ceremonies of our church  
 Cost us a little—oh, they pay the price  
 You take me—amply pay it! Now, we'll talk

So you despise me Mr Gigadibs  
 No depreciation,—nay I beg you, sir!  
 Beside 'tis our engagement don't you know  
 I promised if you'd watch a dinner out  
 We'd see truth dawn together?—truth that peeps  
 Over the glasses edge when dinners done  
 And body gets its sop and holds its noise  
 And leaves soul free a little Now's the time  
 Truths break of day! You do despise me then  
 And if I say despise me —never fear!  
 I know you do not in a certain sense—  
 Not in my arm chair, for example here  
 I well imagine you respect my place  
 (*Status entourage*, worldly circumstance)  
 Quite to its value—very much indeed  
 —Are up to the protesting eyes of you  
 In pride at being seated here for once—  
 You'll turn it to such capital account!  
 When somebody through years and years to come  
 Hints of the bishop —names me—that's enough  
 Blougram? I knew him —(into it you slide)  
 Dined with him once a Corpus Christi Day  
 All alone we two he's a clever man  
 And after dinner—why the wine you know —  
 Oh there was wine, and good!—what with the  
 wine  
 Faith we began upon all sorts of talk!  
 He's no bad fellow Blougram, he had seen  
 Something of mine he relished, some review  
 He's quite above their humbug in his heart  
 Half said as much indeed—the things his trade  
 I warrant Blougram's sceptical at times  
 How otherwise? I liked him I confess!  
*Che che* my dear sir, as we say at Rome,  
 Don't you protest now! It's fair give and take,  
 You have had your turn and spoken your home  
 truths  
 The hands mine now, and here you follow suit

Thus much conceded, still the first fact stays—  
 You do despise me, your ideal of life 50  
 Is not the bishop's you would not be I  
 You would like better to be Goethe now  
 Or Buonaparte—oh! bless me lower still,  
 Count D Orsay—so you did what you preferred  
 Spoke as you thought and as you cannot help, 55  
 Believed or disbelieved no matter what,  
 So long as on that point whatever it was  
 You loosed your mind, were whole and sole yourself  
 —That my ideal never can include  
 Upon that element of truth and worth 60  
 Never be based! for say they make me Pope—  
 (They can't—suppose it for our argument!)  
 Why there I'm at my tether's end I've reached  
 My height and not a height which pleases you  
 An unbelieving Pope won't do you say 65  
 It's like those eerie stories nurses tell  
 Of how some actor on a stage played Death  
 With pasteboard crown sham orb and unsold dart  
 And called himself the monarch of the world  
 Then going in the tire room afterward 70  
 Because the play was done to shift himself  
 Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly  
 The moment he had shut the closet door  
 By Death himself Thus God might touch a Pope  
 At unawares, ask what his baubles mean, 75  
 And whose part he presumed to play just now  
 Best be yourself imperial plain and true!

So drawing comfortable breath again  
 You weigh and find, whatever more or less  
 I boast of my ideal realized 80  
 Is nothing in the balance when opposed  
 To your ideal your grand simple life  
 Of which you will not realize one jot  
 I am much you are nothing you would be all  
 I would be merely much you beat me there 85

No, friend, you do not beat me hearken why!  
 The common problem yours mine, every one's,  
 Is—not to fancy what were fair in life  
 Provided it could be—but finding first  
 What may be then find how to make it fair 90  
 Up to our means a very different thing!  
 No abstract intellectual plan of life  
 Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws  
 But one, a man, who is man and nothing more 94  
 May lead within a world which (by your leave)  
 Is Rome or London not Fool's paradise  
 Embellish Rome idealize away  
 Make Paradise of London if you can  
 You're welcome, nay you're wise

A simile! 100

We mortals cross the ocean of this world

Each in his average cabin of a life  
 The best's not big the worst yields elbow room  
 Now for our six months voyage—how prepare?  
 You come on shipboard with a landsman's list 105  
 Of things he calls convenient so they are!  
 An India screen is pretty furniture  
 A piano forte is a fine resource  
 All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf  
 The new edition fifty volumes long 110  
 And little Greek books with the funny type  
 They get up well at Leipsic fill the next  
 Go on! slabbed marble, what a bath it makes!  
 And Parma's pride, the Jerome let us add! 114  
 Twere pleasant could Correggio's fleeting glow  
 Hang full in face of one where'er one roams  
 Since he more than the others brings with him  
 Italy's self—the marvellous Modenese!—  
 Yet was not on your list before perhaps 119  
 —Alas, friend here's the agent is't the name?  
 The captain or whoever's master here—  
 You see him screw his face up what's his cry  
 Ere you set foot on shipboard? Six feet square!  
 If you won't understand what six feet mean  
 Compute and purchase stores accordingly— 125  
 And if in pique because he overhauls  
 Your Jerome piano, bath you come on board  
 Bare—why, you cut a figure at the first  
 While sympathetic landsmen see you off  
 Not afterward when long ere half seas over, 130  
 You peep up from your utterly naked boards  
 Into some snug and well appointed berth  
 Like mine for instance (try the cooler jug—  
 Put back the other but don't jog the ice!)  
 And mortified you mutter Well and good, 135  
 He sits enjoying his sea furniture  
 'Tis stout and proper and there's store of it  
 Though I've the better notion all agree  
 Of fitting rooms up Hang the carpenter  
 Neat ship-shape fixings and contrivances— 140  
 I would have brought my Jerome frame and all!  
 And meantime you bring nothing never mind—  
 You've proved your artist-nature what you don't  
 You might bring so despise me as I say 144

Now come, let's backward to the starting place  
 See my way we're two college friends, suppose  
 Prepare together for our voyage then,  
 Each note and check the other in his work —  
 Here's mine a bishop's outfit criticize!  
 What's wrong? why won't you be a bishop too? 150

Why first you don't believe you don't and can't  
 (Not stately that is and fixedly  
 And absolutely and exclusively)  
 In any revelation called divine  
 No dogmas nail your faith and what remains 155

But say so, like the honest man you are?  
First therefore overhaul theology!  
Nay I too not a fool, you please to think  
Must find believing every whit as hard  
And if I do not frankly say as much 160  
The ugly consequence is clear enough

Now wait, my friend well I do not believe—  
If you'll accept no faith that is not fixed  
Absolute and exclusive as you say  
You're wrong—I mean to prove it in due time 165  
Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie  
I could not cannot solve, nor ever shall  
So give up hope accordingly to solve—  
(To you and over the wine) Our dogmas then  
With both of us though in unlike degree 170  
Missing full credence—overboard with them!  
I mean to meet you on your own premise  
Good, there go mine in company with yours!

And now what are we? unbelievers both  
Calm and complete, determinately fixed 175  
To day, to-morrow and for ever, pray?  
You'll guarantee me that? Not so I think!  
In no wise! all we've gained is that belief,  
As unbelief before, shakes us by fits  
Confounds us like its predecessor Where's  
The gain? how can we guard our unbelief  
Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem here  
Just when we are safest there's a sunset touch  
A fancy from a flower bell some one's death,  
A chorus ending from Euripides — 185  
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears  
As old and new at once as nature's self  
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,  
Take hands and dance there a fantastic ring  
Round the ancient idol, on his base again — 190  
The grand Perhaps! we look on helplessly  
There the old misgivings crooked questions are—  
This good God—what he could do, if he would  
Would if he could—then must have done long since  
If so, when, where and how? some way must be —  
Once feel about, and soon or late you hit 196  
Some sense in which it might be, after all  
Why not, The Way the Truth, the Life?

—That way

Over the mountain which who stands upon 200  
Is apt to doubt if it be meant for a road  
While, if he views it from the waste itself  
Up goes the line there, plan from base to brow,  
Not vague mistakable! what's a break or two  
Seen from the unbroken desert either side? 205  
And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)  
What if the breaks themselves should prove at last  
The most consummate of contrivances

To train a man's eye, teach him what is faith?  
And so we stumble at truth's very test! 210  
All we have gained then by our unbelief  
Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,  
For one of faith diversified by doubt  
We called the chess board white—we call it black

Well you rejoin the ends no worse at least  
We've reason for both colours on the board 216  
Why not confess, then, where I drop the faith  
And you the doubt that I'm as right as you?

Because, friend, in the next place, this being so  
And both things even,—faith and unbelief 220  
Left to a man's choice—we'll proceed a step  
Returning to our image which I like

A man's choice yes—but a cabin-passenger's—  
The man made for the special life of the world—  
Do you forget him? I remember though! 225  
Consult our ship's conditions and you find  
One and but one choice suitable to all  
The choice that you unluckily prefer  
Turning things topsy turvy—they or it  
Going to the ground Belief or unbelief 230  
Bears upon life determines its whole course  
Begins at its beginning See the world  
Such as it is,—you made it not nor I,  
I mean to take it as it is—and you 234  
Not so you'll take it—though you get nought else  
I know the special kind of life I like  
What suits the most my idiosyncrasy  
Brings out the best of me and bears me fruit  
In power, peace pleasantness and length of days  
I find that positive belief does this 240  
For me and unbelief no whit of this  
—For you it does however?—that we'll try  
Tis clear, I cannot lead my life at least  
Induce the world to let me peaceably,  
Without declaring at the outset Friends, 245  
I absolutely and peremptorily  
Believe! —I say faith is my waking life  
One sleeps indeed and dreams at intervals,  
We know but waking's the main point with us  
And my provisions for life's waking part 250  
Accordingly I use heart head and hand  
All day I build scheme study, and make friends  
And when night overtakes me down I lie  
Sleep, dream a little and get done with it,  
The sooner the better, to begin afresh 255  
What's midnight doubt before the day's spring's faith?  
You the philosopher that disbelieve  
That recognize the night give dreams their weight—  
To be consistent you should keep your bed  
Abstain from healthy acts that prove you man, 260  
For fear you drowse perhaps at unawares!



And certainly at night you'll sleep and dream  
 Live through the day and bustle as you please  
 And so you live to sleep as I to wake,  
 To unbelieve as I to still believe? 265  
 Well and the common sense of the world calls you  
 Bed ridden—and its good things come to me  
 Its estimation which is half the fight,  
 That's the first cabin comfort I secure— 269  
 The next but you perceive with half an eye!  
 Come, come it's best believing if we may  
 You can't but own that!

Next concede again  
 If once we choose belief on all accounts  
 We can't be too decisive in our faith, 275  
 Conclusive and exclusive in its terms,  
 To suit the world which gives us the good things  
 In every man's career are certain points  
 Whereon he dares not be indifferent,  
 The world detects him clearly if he dare, 280  
 As baffled at the game and losing life  
 He may care little or he may care much  
 For riches, honour pleasure work repose,  
 Since various theories of life and life's  
 Success are extant which might easily 285  
 Comport with either estimate of these,  
 And whoso chooses wealth or poverty,  
 Labour or quiet is not judged a fool  
 Because his fellows would choose otherwise  
 We let him choose upon his own account 290  
 So long as he's consistent with his choice  
 But certain points left wholly to himself,  
 When once a man has arbitrated on,  
 We say he must succeed there or go hang  
 Thus he should wed the woman he loves most 295  
 Or needs most, whatsoever the love or need—  
 For he can't wed twice Then he must avouch  
 Or follow, at the least, sufficiently  
 The form of faith his conscience holds the best  
 Whatever the process of conviction was 300  
 For nothing can compensate his mistake  
 On such a point, the man himself being judge  
 He cannot wed twice nor twice lose his soul

Well now, there's one great form of Christian faith  
 I happened to be born in—which to teach 305  
 Was given me as I grew up on all hands,  
 As best and readiest means of living by  
 The same on examination being proved  
 The most pronounced moreover, fixed, precise  
 And absolute form of faith in the whole world—  
 Accordingly, most potent of all forms 311  
 For working on the world Observe, my friend!  
 Such as you know me I am free to say,  
 In these hard latter days which hamper one  
 Myself—by no immoderate exercise 315

Of intellect and learning but the tact  
 To let external forces work for me  
 —Bid the streets' stones be bread and they'll be 316  
 bread  
 Bid Peter's creed or rather Hildebrand's  
 Exalt me over my fellows in the world 320  
 And make my life an ease and joy and pride  
 It does so,—which for me's a great point gained  
 Who have a soul and body that exact  
 A comfortable care in many ways  
 There's power in me and will to dominate 325  
 Which I must exercise, they hurt me else  
 In many ways I need mankind's respect  
 Obedience, and the love that's born of fear  
 While at the same time, there's a taste I have  
 A toy of soul, a titillating thing 330  
 Refuses to digest these dainties crude  
 The naked life is gross till clothed upon  
 I must take what men offer with a grace  
 As though I would not could I help it take!  
 An uniform I wear though over rich— 335  
 Something imposed on me no choice of mine,  
 No fancy dress worn for pure fancy's sake  
 And despicable therefore! now folk kneel  
 And kiss my hand—of course the Church's hand  
 Thus I am made thus life is best for me 340  
 And thus that it should be I have procured,  
 And thus it could not be another way,  
 I venture to imagine

You'll reply—  
 So far my choice no doubt is a success 345  
 But were I made of better elements,  
 With nobler instincts purer tastes like you  
 I hardly would account the thing success  
 Though it did all for me I say

But, friend 350  
 We speak of what is not of what might be  
 And how twere better if twere otherwise  
 I am the man you see here plain enough  
 Grant I'm a beast why beasts must lead beasts' lives!  
 Suppose I own at once to tail and claws 355  
 The tailless man exceeds me but being tailed  
 I'll lash out lion fashion and leave apes  
 To dock their stump and dress their haunches up  
 My business is not to remake myself  
 But make the absolute best of what God made 360  
 Or—our first simile—though you prove me doomed  
 To a viler berth still to the steerage hole  
 The sheep pen or the pig sty, I should strive  
 To make what use of each were possible,  
 And as this cabin gets upholstery, 365  
 That hutch should rustle with sufficient straw

But, friend I don't acknowledge quite so fast  
 I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes

Enumerated so complacently 369  
 On the mere ground that you forsooth can find  
 In this particular life I choose to lead  
 No fit provision for them Can you not?  
 Say you my fault is I address myself  
 To grosser estimators than I should judge?  
 And that's no way of holding up the soul 375  
 Which nobler needs men's praise perhaps yet  
 knows

One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools—  
 Would like the two but forced to choose takes that  
 I pine among my million imbeciles  
 (You think) aware some dozen men of sense 380  
 Eye me and know me whether I believe  
 In the last winking Virgin as I vow  
 And am a fool or disbelieve in her  
 And am a knave—approve in neither case  
 Withhold their voices though I look their way 385  
 Like Verdi when at his worst opera's end  
 (The thing they gave at Florence—what's its name?)  
 While the mad housefuls plaudits near out bang  
 His orchestra of salt-box tongs and bones 389  
 He looks through all the roaring and the wreaths  
 Where sits Rossini patient in his stall

Nay friend I meet you with an answer here—  
 For even your prime men who appraise their kind  
 Are men still catch a wheel within a wheel  
 See more in a truth than the truth's simple self 395  
 Confuse themselves You see lads walk the street  
 Sixty the minute what's to note in that?  
 You see one lad overstride a chimney stack,  
 Him you must watch—he's sure to fall, yet stands!  
 Our interests on the dangerous edge of things 400  
 The honest thief the tender murderer,  
 The superstitious atheist demirep  
 That loves and saves her soul in new French books—  
 We watch while these in equilibrium keep  
 The giddy line midway one step aside 405  
 They're classed and done with I then keep the line  
 Before your sages—just the men to shrink  
 From the gross weights, coarse scales, and labels  
 broad

You offer their refinement Fool or knave?  
 Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave 410  
 When there's a thousand diamond weights between?  
 So I enlist them Your picked twelve you'll find  
 Profess themselves indignant scandalized  
 At thus being held unable to explain  
 How a superior man who disbelieves 415  
 May not believe as well that's Schelling's way!  
 It's through my coming in the tail of time  
 Nicking the minute with a happy tact  
 Had I been born three hundred years ago  
 They'd say What's strange? Blougram of course b  
 leaves , 420  
 And, seventy years since, disbelieves of course

But now He may believe and yet and yet  
 How can he?—All eyes turn with interest  
 Whereas step off the line on either side—  
 You for example clever to a fault, 425  
 The rough and ready man who write apace,  
 Read somewhat seldomer think perhaps even less—  
 You disbelieve! Who wonders and who cares?  
 Lord So-and So—his coat bedropped with wax  
 All Peter's chains about his waist his back 430  
 Brave with the needlework of Noodledom—  
 Believes! Agam, who wonders and who cares?  
 But I, the man of sense and learning too  
 The able to think yet act the this, the that  
 I, to believe at this late time of day! 435  
 Enough, you see, I need not fear contempt

—Except it's yours! Admire me as these may  
 You don't But whom at least do you admire?  
 Present your own perfection your ideal 439  
 Your pattern man for a minute—oh make haste  
 Is it Napoleon you would have us grow?  
 Concede the means allow his head and hand  
 (A large concession, clever as you are)  
 Good!—In our common primal element  
 Of unbelief (we can't believe you know— 445  
 We're still at that admission recollect!)  
 Where do you find—apart from towering o'er  
 The secondary temporary aims  
 Which satisfy the gross taste you despise—  
 Where do you find his star?—his crazy trust 450  
 God knows through what or in what? it's alive  
 And shines and leads him and that's all we want  
 Have we aught in our sober night shall point  
 Such ends as his were, and direct the means  
 Of working out our purpose straight as his, 455  
 Nor bring a moment's trouble on success  
 With after-care to justify the same?  
 —Be a Napoleon and yet disbelieve—  
 Why, the man's mad friend take his light away!  
 What's the vague good o' the world for which you  
 dare 460

With comfort to yourself blow millions up?  
 We neither of us see it! we do see  
 The blown up millions—spatter of their brains  
 And writhing of their bowels and so forth,  
 In that bewildering entanglement 465  
 Of horrible eventualities  
 Past calculation to the end of time!  
 Can I mistake for some clear word of God  
 (Which were my ample warrant for it all)  
 His puff of hazy instincts idle talk, 470  
 The State that's I quack nonsense about kings  
 And (when one beats the man to his last hold)  
 The vague idea of setting things to rights,  
 Policing people efficaciously  
 More to their profit most of all to his own, 475  
 The whole to end that dimmest of ends

By an Austrian marriage cant to us the Church,  
 And resurrection of the old *regime*?  
 Would I, who hope to live a dozen years,  
 Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and such? 480  
 No for, concede me but the merest chance  
 Doubt may be wrong—there's judgment, life to  
     come!  
 With just that chance, I dare not Doubt proves  
     right?  
 This present life is all?—you offer me  
 Its dozen noisy years with not a chance 485  
 That wedding an archduchess wearing lace  
 And getting called by divers new coined names  
 Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me dine  
 Sleep read and chat in quiet as I like!  
 Therefore I will not 490

                    Take another case,  
 Fit up the cabin yet another way  
 What say you to the poet? shall we write  
 Hamlet, Othello—make the world our own  
 Without a risk to run of either sort? 495  
 I can't!—to put the strongest reason first  
     But try, you urge the trying shall suffice  
 The aim if reached or not makes great the life  
 Try to be Shakespeare leave the rest to fate!  
 Spare my self knowledge—there's no fooling me!  
 If I prefer remaining my poor self 501  
 I say so not in self dispraise but praise  
 If I'm a Shakespeare let the well alone,  
 Why should I try to be what now I am?  
 If I'm no Shakespeare, as too probable — 505  
 His power and consciousness and self delight  
 And all we want in common shall I find—  
 Trying for ever? while on points of taste  
 Wherewith to speak it humbly he and I  
 Are dowered alike—I'll ask you I or he 510  
 Which in our two lives realizes most?  
 Much, he imagined—somewhat I possess  
 He had the imagination, stick to that!  
 Let him say In the face of my soul's works  
 Your world is worthless and I touch it not 515  
 Lest I should wrong them—I'll withdraw my plea  
 But does he say so? look upon his life!  
 Himself who only can gives judgment there  
 He leaves his towers and gorgeous palaces  
 To build the trimmest house in Stratford town 520  
 Saves money spends it, owns the worth of things  
 Giulio Romano's pictures Dowland's lute  
 Enjoys a show respects the puppets too,  
 And none more had he seen its entry once  
 Than Pandulph of fair Milan cardinal 525  
 Why then should I who play that personage,  
 The very Pandulph Shakespeare's fancy made,  
 Be told that had the poet chanced to start  
 From where I stand now (some degree like mine  
 Being just the goal he ran his race to reach) 530

He would have run the whole race back forsooth  
 And left being Pandulph to begin write plays?  
 Ah, the earth's best can be but the earth's best!  
 Did Shakespeare live he could but sit at home  
 And get himself in dreams the Vatican 535  
 Greek busts Venetian paintings Roman walls  
 And English books, none equal to his own  
 Which I read bound in gold (he never did)  
 —Terni's fall Naples bay and Gothard's top—  
 Eh friend? I could not fancy one of these 540  
 But as I pour this claret there they are  
 I've gained them—crossed St Gothard last July  
 With ten mules to the carriage and a bed  
 Slung inside is my hap the worse for that? 544  
 We want the same things Shakespeare and myself  
 And what I want, I have he, gifted more  
 Could fancy he too had them when he liked  
 But not so thoroughly that, if fate allowed  
 He would not have them also in my sense  
 We play one game, I send the ball aloft 550  
 No less adroitly that of fifty strokes  
 Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and high  
 Which sends them back to me I wish and get  
 He struck balls higher and with better skill  
 But at a poor fence level with his head, 555  
 And hit—his Stratford house a coat of arms,  
 Successful dealings in his grain and wool —  
 While I receive heaven's incense in my nose  
 And style myself the cousin of Queen Bess  
 Ask him if this life's all who wins the game? 560

Believe—and our whole argument breaks up  
 Enthusiasm's the best thing I repeat,  
 Only, we can't command it fire and life  
 Are all, dead matters nothing we agree  
 And be it a mad dream or God's very breath 565  
 The fact's the same,—belief's fire, once in us,  
 Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself  
 We penetrate our life with such a glow  
 As fire lends wood and iron—this turns steel 569  
 That burns to ash—all's one, fire proves its power  
 For good or ill, since men call flare success  
 But paint a fire, it will not therefore burn  
 Light one in me, I'll find it food enough!  
 Why to be Luther—that's a life to lead,  
 Incomparably better than my own 575  
 He comes reclaims God's earth for God he says,  
 Sets up God's rule again by simple means,  
 Re opens a shut book, and all is done  
 He flared out in the flaring of mankind, 579  
 Such Luther's luck was how shall such be mine?  
 If he succeeded, nothing's left to do  
 And if he did not altogether—well  
 Strauss is the next advance All Strauss should be  
 I might be also But to what result?  
 He looks upon no future Luther did 585  
 What can I gain on the denying side?

Ice makes no conflagration State the facts  
 Read the text right, emancipate the world—  
 The emancipated world enjoys itself  
 With scarce a thank-you Blougram told it first 590  
 It could not owe a farthing—not to him  
 More than St Paul! twould press its pay you think?  
 Then add there's still that plaguy hundredth chance  
 Strauss may be wrong And so a risk is run—  
 For what gam? not for Luther's who secured 595  
 A real heaven in his heart throughout his life  
 Supposing death a little altered things!

Ay, but since really I lack faith, you cry  
 I run the same risk really on all sides,  
 In cool indifference as bold unbelief 600  
 As well be Strauss as swing twixt Paul and him  
 It's not worth having such imperfect faith,  
 Nor more available to do faith's work  
 Than unbelief like mine Whole faith or none!

Softly, my friend! I must dispute that point 605  
 Once own the use of faith, I'll find you faith  
 We're back on Christian ground You call for faith  
 I show you doubt to prove that faith exists  
 The more of doubt, the stronger faith I say,  
 If faith overcomes doubt How I know it does? 610  
 By life and man's free will God gave for that!  
 To mould life as we choose it shows our choice  
 That's our one act, the previous work's his own  
 You criticize the soil? it reared this tree—  
 This broad life and whatever fruit it bears! 615  
 What matter though I doubt at every pore  
 Head doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers  
 ends,

Doubts in the trivial work of every day,  
 Doubts at the very bases of my soul 619  
 In the grand moments when she probes herself—  
 If finally I have a life to show,  
 The thing I did, brought out in evidence  
 Against the thing done to me underground  
 By hell and all its brood, for aught I know? 624  
 I say whence sprang this? shows it faith or doubt?  
 All's doubt in me where's break of faith in this?  
 It is the idea, the feeling and the love  
 God means mankind should strive for and show forth,  
 Whatever be the process to that end,—  
 And not historic knowledge logic sound 630  
 And metaphysical acumen sure!

What think ye of Christ, friend? when all's done  
 and said  
 Like you this Christianity or not?  
 It may be false, but will you wish it true?  
 Has it your vote to be so if it can? 635  
 Trust you an instinct silenced long ago  
 That will break silence and enjoin you love  
 What mortified philosophy is hoarse,  
 And all in vain, with bidding you despise?

If you desire faith—then you've faith enough 640  
 What else seeks God—nay what else seek ourselves?  
 You form a notion of me well suppose,  
 On hearsay it's a favourable one  
 But still (you add) there was no such good man  
 Because of contradiction in the facts 645  
 One proves for instance he was born in Rome,  
 This Blougram yet throughout the tales of him  
 I see he figures as an Englishman  
 Well, the two things are reconcilable  
 But would I rather you discovered that, 650  
 Subjoining— Still, what matter though they be?  
 Blougram—concerns me naught, born here or there

Pure faith indeed—you know not what you ask!  
 Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,  
 Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much 655  
 The sense of conscious creatures to be borne  
 It were the seeing him no flesh shall dare  
 Some think, Creation's meant to show him forth  
 I say it's meant to hide him all it can,  
 And that's what all the blessed evils for 660  
 Its use in Time is to environ us,  
 Our breath our drop of dew with shield enough  
 Against that sight till we can bear its stress  
 Under a vertical sun the exposed brain  
 And lidless eye and disemprisoned heart 665  
 Less certainly would wither up at once  
 Than mind confronted with the truth of him  
 But time and earth case harden us to live  
 The feeblest sense is trusted most the child  
 Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the place 670  
 Plays on and grows to be a man like us  
 With me, faith means perpetual unbelief  
 Kept quiet like the snake neath Michael's foot  
 Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe  
 Or if that's too ambitious,—here's my box— 675  
 I need the excitation of a pinch  
 Threatening the torpor of the inside nose  
 Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never comes  
 Leave it in peace advise the simple folk  
 Make it aware of peace by itching-fits, 680  
 Say I—let doubt occasion still more faith!

You'll say, once all believed man, woman child  
 In that dear middle age these noodles praise  
 How you'd exult if I could put you back  
 Six hundred years blot out cosmogony, 685  
 Geology, ethnology, what not,  
 (Greek endings, each the little passing bell  
 That signifies some faith's about to die),  
 And set you square with Genesis again,—  
 When such a traveller told you his last news 690  
 He saw the ark a top of Ararat  
 But did not climb there since 'twas getting dusk  
 And robber bands infest the mountain's foot!  
 How should you feel, I ask, in such an age,

How act? As other people felt and did, 695  
 With soul more blank than this decanter's knob,  
 Believe—and yet he kill job, fornicate  
 Full in belief's face like the beast you'd be!

No, when the fight begins within himself, 699  
 A man's worth something God stoops over his head  
 Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—  
 He's left, himself, in the middle the soul wakes  
 And grows Prolong that battle through his life!  
 Never leave growing till the life to come!  
 Here, we've got callous to the Virgin's winks 705  
 That used to puzzle people wholesomely  
 Men have outgrown the shame of being fools  
 What are the laws of nature, not to bend  
 If the Church bid them? brother Newman asks  
 Up with the Immaculate Conception then— 710  
 On to the rack with faith!—is my advice!  
 Will not that hurry us upon our knees,  
 Knocking our breasts, It can't be—yet it shall!  
 Who am I the worm to argue with my Pope? 714  
 Low things confound the high things! and so forth  
 That's better than acquitting God with grace  
 As some folks do He's tried—no case is proved,  
 Philosophy is lenient—he may go!

You'll say—the old system's not so obsolete  
 But men believe still ay, but who and where? 720  
 King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet  
 The sacred flame so Antonelli writes,  
 But even of these what ragamuffin saint  
 Believes God watches him continually,  
 As he believes in fire that it will burn, 725  
 Or rain that it will drench him? Break fire's law  
 Sin against rain, although the penalty  
 Be just a singe or soaking? No, he smiles  
 Those laws are laws that can enforce themselves

The sum of all is—yes, my doubt is great 730  
 My faith's still greater, then my faith's enough  
 I have read much thought much experienced much  
 Yet would die rather than avow my fear  
 The Naples liquefaction may be false,  
 When set to happen by the palace clock 735  
 According to the clouds or dinner time  
 I hear you recommend, I might at least  
 Eliminate declassify my faith  
 Since I adopt it keeping what I must  
 And leaving what I can—such points as this 740  
 I won't—that is I can't throw one away  
 Supposing there's no truth in what I hold  
 About the need of trial to man's faith  
 Still when you bid me purify the same  
 To such a process I discern no end 745  
 Clearing off one excrescence to see two,  
 There's ever a next in size, now grown as big  
 That meets the knife I cut and cut again!

First cut the Liquefaction what comes last  
 But Fichte's clever cut at God himself? 750  
 Experimentalize on sacred things?  
 I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain  
 To stop betimes they all get drunk alike  
 The first step I am master not to take

You'd find the cutting process to your taste 755  
 As much as leaving growths of lies unpruned  
 Nor see more danger in it—you retort  
 Your taste's worth mine, but my taste proves more  
 wise  
 When we consider that the steadfast hold  
 On the extreme end of the chain of faith 760  
 Gives all the advantage makes the difference  
 With the rough purblind mass we seek to rule  
 We are their lords or they are free of us  
 Just as we tighten or relax our hold  
 So other matters equal we'll revert 765  
 To the first problem—which if solved my way  
 And thrown into the balance, turns the scale—  
 How we may lead a comfortable life,  
 How suit our luggage to the cabin's size

Of course you are remarking all this time 770  
 How narrowly and grossly I view life,  
 Respect the creature comforts care to rule  
 The masses and regard complacently  
 The cabin, in our old phrase Well I do  
 I act for, talk for, live for this world now 775  
 As this world calls for action life and talk  
 No prejudice to what next world may prove,  
 Whose new laws and requirements my best pledge  
 To observe them, is that I observe these now  
 Doing hereafter what I do meanwhile 780  
 Let us concede (gratuitously though)  
 Next life relieves the soul of body, yields  
 Pure spiritual enjoyment well, my friend,  
 Why lose this life in the meantime, since its use  
 May be to make the next life more intense? 785

Do you know, I have often had a dream  
 (Work it up in your next month's article)  
 Of man's poor spirit in its progress, still  
 Losing true life for ever and a day  
 Through ever trying to be and ever being— 790  
 In the evolution of successive spheres—  
 Before its actual sphere and place of life,  
 Halfway into the next, which having reached  
 It shoots with corresponding foolery  
 Halfway into the next still on and off! 795  
 As when a traveller bound from North to South  
 Scouts fur in Russia what's its use in France?  
 In France spurns flannel where's its need in Spain?  
 In Spain drops cloth, too cumbrous for Algiers!  
 Linen goes next and last the skin itself, 800  
 A superfluity at Timbuctoo

When through his journey was the fool at ease?  
 I'm at ease now friend worldly in this world,  
 I take and like its way of life, I think  
 My brothers who administer the means 805  
 Live better for my comfort—that's good too  
 And God if he pronounce upon it all  
 Approves my service, which is better still  
 If he keep silence—why for you or me 809  
 Or that brute beast pulled up in to days Times  
 What odds is it save to ourselves, what life we lead?

You meet me at this issue you declare—  
 All special pleading done with—truth is truth,  
 And justifies itself by undreamed ways  
 You don't fear but it's better if we doubt 815  
 To say so act up to our truth perceived  
 However feebly Do then—act away!  
 'Tis there I'm on the watch for you How one acts  
 Is both of us agree our chief concern  
 And how you'll act is what I fain would see 820  
 If like the candid person you appear  
 You dare to make the most of your life's scheme  
 As I of mine, live up to its full law  
 Since there's no higher law that counterchecks  
 Put natural religion to the test 825  
 You've just demolished the revealed with—quick  
 Down to the root of all that checks your will,  
 All prohibition to lie kill and thief  
 Or even to be an atheistic priest!  
 Suppose a pricking to incontinence— 830  
 Philosophers deduce you chastity  
 Or shame from just the fact that at the first  
 Whoso embraced a woman in the field  
 Threw club down, and forewent his brains beside,  
 So stood a ready victim in the reach 835  
 Of any brother savage club in hand,  
 Hence saw the use of going out of sight  
 In wood or cave to prosecute his loves  
 I read this in a French book to other day  
 Does law so analysed coerce you much? 840  
 Oh men spin clouds of fuzz where matters end,  
 But you who reach where the first thread begins,  
 You'll soon cut that!—which means you can, but  
 won't,

Through certain instincts blind unreasoned out  
 You dare not set aside you can't tell why, 845  
 But there they are, and so you let them rule  
 Then, friend you seem as much a slave as I,  
 A liar conscious coward and hypocrite  
 Without the good the slave expects to get,  
 Suppose he has a master after all! 850  
 You own your instincts? why what else do I,  
 Who want am made for and must have a God  
 Ere I can be aught do aught?—no mere name  
 Want, but the true thing with what proves its truth  
 To wit a relation from that thing to me, 855  
 Touching from head to foot—which touch I feel,

And with it take the rest this life of ours!  
 I live my life here yours you dare not live

¶

—Not as I state it who (you please subjoin)  
 Disfigure such a life and call it names 860  
 While to your mind, remains another way  
 For simple men knowledge and power have rights  
 But ignorance and weakness have rights too  
 There needs no crucial effort to find truth  
 If here or there or anywhere about 865  
 We ought to turn each side, try hard and see  
 And if we can't be glad we've earned at least  
 The right by one laborious proof the more  
 To graze in peace earth's pleasant pasturage  
 Men are not angels neither are they brutes 870  
 Something we may see all we cannot see  
 What need of lying? I say, I see all  
 And swear to each detail the most minute  
 In what I think a Pan's face—you, mere cloud  
 I swear I hear him speak and see him wink 875  
 For fear, if once I drop the emphasis  
 Mankind may doubt there's any cloud at all  
 You take the simpler life—ready to see  
 Willing to see (for no clouds worth a face)—  
 And leaving quiet what no strength can move 880  
 And which who bids you move? who has the right?  
 I bid you, but you are God's sheep, not mine  
*Pastor est tui Dominus* You find  
 In this the pleasant pasture of our life  
 Much you may eat without the least offence, 885  
 Much you don't eat because your maw objects  
 Much you would eat but that your fellow flock  
 Open great eyes at you and even butt,  
 And thereupon you like your mates so well  
 You cannot please yourself offending them 890  
 Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep  
 You weigh your pleasure with their butts and bleats  
 And strike the balance Sometimes certain fears  
 Restrain you real checks since you find them so 894  
 Sometimes you please yourself and nothing checks  
 And thus you graze through life with not one lie,  
 And like it best

But do you in truth's name?  
 If so, you beat—which means you are not I— 899  
 Who needs must make earth mine and feed my fill  
 Not simply unbutted at, unbickered with,  
 But motioned to the velvet of the sward  
 By those obsequious wethers very selves  
 Look at me, sir, my age is double yours  
 At yours, I knew beforehand so enjoyed 905  
 What now I should be—as, permit the word,  
 I pretty well imagine your whole range  
 And stretch of tether twenty years to come  
 We both have minds and bodies much alike  
 In truth's name, don't you want my bishopric, 910  
 My daily bread, my influence and my state?

You're young I'm old, you must be old one day  
 Will you find then as I do hour by hour  
 Women their lovers kneel to who cut curls  
 From your fat lap dogs ear to grace a brooch— 915  
 Dukes, who petition just to kiss your ring—  
 With much beside you know or may conceive?  
 Suppose we die to-night well here am I  
 Such were my gains, life bore this fruit to me,  
 While writing all the same my articles 920  
 On music poetry the fictile vase  
 Found at Albano chess, Anacreon's Greek  
 But you—the highest honour in your life  
 The thing you'll crown yourself with all your days  
 Is—dining here and drinking this last glass 925  
 I pour you out in sign of amity  
 Before we part for ever Of your power  
 And social influence, worldly worth in short  
 Judge what's my estimation by the fact  
 I do not condescend to enjoin beseech 930  
 Hint secrecy on one of all these words!  
 You're shrewd and know that should you publish  
 one

The world would brand the lie—my enemies first  
 Who'd sneer—the bishop's an arch hypocrite  
 And knave perhaps but not so frank a fool 935  
 Whereas I should not dare for both my ears  
 Breathe one such syllable smile one such smile  
 Before the chaplain who reflects myself—  
 My shades so much more potent than your flesh  
 What's your reward, self-abnegating friend? 940  
 Stood you confessed of those exceptional  
 And privileged great natures that dwarf mine—  
 A zealot with a mad ideal in reach,  
 A poet just about to print his ode,  
 A statesman with a scheme to stop this war 945  
 An artist whose religion is his art—  
 I should have nothing to object such men  
 Carry the fire all things grow warm to them  
 Their drugget's worth my purple they beat me  
 But you—you're just as little those as I— 950  
 You Gigadibs who thirty years of age  
 Write stately for Blackwood's Magazine,  
 Believe you see two points in Hamlet's soul  
 Unseized by the Germans yet—which view you'll  
 print—

Meantime the best you have to show being still 955  
 That lively lightsome article we took  
 Almost for the true Dickens—what's its name?  
 The Slum and Cellar—or Whitechapel life  
 Limned after dark! it made me laugh I know, 959  
 And pleased a month and brought you in ten pounds  
 —Success I recognized and compliment,  
 And therefore give you if you choose three words  
 (The card and pencil scratch is quite enough)  
 Which whether here in Dublin or New York  
 Will get you, prompt as at my eyebrow's wink 965  
 Such terms as never you aspired to get

In all our own reviews and some not ours  
 Go write your lively sketches! be the first  
 Blougram or The Eccentric Confidence —  
 Or better simply say The Outward-bound  
 Why men as soon would throw it in my teeth  
 As copy and quote the infamy chalked broad  
 About me on the church door opposite  
 You will not wait for that experience though,  
 I fancy howsoever you decide  
 To discontinue—not detesting not  
 Defaming but at least—despising me!

Over his wine so smiled and talked his hour  
 Sylvester Blougram styled *in partibus*  
*Episcopus nec non*—(the deuce knows what 980  
 It's changed to by our novel hierarchy)  
 With Gigadibs the literary man  
 Who played with spoons explored his plate's design  
 And ranged the olive stones about its edge  
 While the great bishop rolled him out a mind 985  
 Long crumpled till creased consciousness lay smooth

For Blougram, he believed, say half he spoke  
 The other portion as he shaped it thus  
 For argumentatory purposes  
 He felt his foe was foolish to dispute 990  
 Some arbitrary accidental thoughts  
 That crossed his mind amusing because new  
 He chose to represent as fixtures there  
 Invariable convictions (such they seemed  
 Beside his interlocutor's loose cards 995  
 Flung daily down and not the same way twice)  
 While certain hell deep instincts man's weak tongue  
 Is never bold to utter in their truth  
 Because styled hell deep (tis an old mistake  
 To place hell at the bottom of the earth) 1000  
 He ignored these—not having in readiness  
 Their nomenclature and philosophy  
 He said true things but called them by wrong names  
 On the whole he thought I justify myself  
 On every point where cavillers like this 1005  
 Oppugn my life he tries one kind of fence  
 I close he's woisted that's enough for him  
 He's on the ground! if ground should break away  
 I take my stand on, there's a firmer yet  
 Beneath it both of us may sink and reach 1010  
 His ground was over mine and broke the first  
 So let him sit with me this many a year!

He did not sit five minutes just a week  
 Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence 1014  
 Something had struck him in the Outward bound  
 Another way than Blougram's purpose was  
 And having bought not cabin furniture  
 But settler's implements (enough for three)  
 And started for Australia—there I hope,



By this time he has tested his first plough  
And studied his last chapter of St John

## Hap

THOMAS HARDY

If but some vengeful god would call to me  
From up the sky, and laugh Thou suffering thing,  
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,  
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!  
Then would I bear it clench myself and die 5  
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited,  
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I  
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed

But not so How arrives it joy lies slain,  
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown? 10  
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain  
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan  
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown  
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain

## Pied Beauty

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

Glory be to God for dappled things—  
For skies of couple colour as a brindled cow  
For rose moles all in stipple upon trout that  
swim  
Fresh firecoal chestnut falls finches wings,  
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold fallow and  
plough 5  
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim

All things, counter original, spare strange  
Whatever is fickle freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow, sweet sour, adazzle, dim,  
He fathers forth whose beauty is past change 10  
Praise him



## Death, Thou Shalt Die

We come at last to the theme of death death as seen  
from many different vantages death omnipresent Omni  
present yes but to the Christian not omnipotent for to  
him death is the door which opens to his reward in the  
very act of dying the Christian triumphs over death for  
as Donne puts it

1020 One short sleep past we wake eternally  
And Death shall be no more Death thou shalt die!

The same paradox had been expressed by Shake  
speare And Death once dead there's no more dying  
then The death of his friend William King recalled  
Milton to the writing of poetry which he had for a time  
abandoned he felt his loss with strong passion but with  
passion controlled and molded to his purposes He de  
liberately employed the conventions of the pastoral style  
but raised them to the high level of his grief Each of the  
traditional symbols is made to carry the weight of a  
deeper meaning and the poet's anger rising from the  
purely personal—

Alas! what boots it with incessant care  
To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade,  
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?  
Were it not better done as other use  
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade  
Or with the tangles of Neëra's hair?

to the condemnation of the false shepherds on high  
ethical grounds but purged now of his anger through  
expressing it and through the suffering of his remem  
brance he attains to the vision

For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead  
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor  
So Lycidas sunk low but mounted high  
Through the dear night of Him that walked  
the waves

No better contrast between the nineteenth century and  
the first half of our own can be found than that between  
the Ulysses of Tennyson and The Hollow Men of  
Eliot each is the symbol of a different attitude the one  
of hope, the other of despair The section ends with  
Dylan Thomas protest against death even with his  
dying breath he raged against death—to no avail

## Poor Soul

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Poor soul the center of my sinful earth,  
My sinful earth these rebel powers that thee array,  
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,  
Panting thy outward walls so costly gay?  
Why so large cost, having so short a lease 5  
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?  
Shall worms inheritors of this excess  
Eat up thy charge? is this thy body's end?  
Then soul live thou upon thy servant's loss,  
And let that pine to aggravate thy store 10  
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross,  
Within be fed without be rich no more  
So shall thou feed on Death that feeds on men  
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then

## Death, Be Not Proud

JOHN DONNE

Death be not proud though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so  
For those whom thou thinkst thou dost overthrow  
Die not poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me  
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be 5  
Much pleasure then from thee much more must  
flow

And soonest our best men with thee do go  
Rest of their bones and souls delivery!  
Thou art slave to fate chance kings and  
desperate men,  
And dost with poison war, and sickness dwell, 10  
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well  
And better than thy stroke Why swellst thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally  
And Death shall be no more Death thou shalt  
die!

## Lycidas

JOHN MILTON

*In this monody the author bewails a learned friend  
unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester  
on the Irish Seas, 1637, and by occasion foretells  
the ruin of our corrupted clergy, then in their height*

Yet once more O ye laurels and once more  
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere  
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,  
And with forced fingers rude  
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year 5  
Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear  
Compels me to disturb your season due  
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime  
Young Lycidas and hath not left his peer 10  
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew  
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme  
He must not float upon his watery bier  
Unwept and welter to the parching wind,  
Without the meed of some melodious tear  
Begin then Sisters of the sacred well 15  
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring  
Begin and somewhat loudly sweep the sting  
Hence with denial vain and coy excuse  
So may some gentle Muse  
With lucky words favor my destined urn, 20  
And as he passes turn,  
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud!

For we were nursed upon the self-same hill  
Fed the same flock by fountain, shade and rill

Together both, ere the high lawns appeared 25  
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn  
We drove a field and both together heard  
What time the gray fly winds her sultry horn,  
Battenng our flocks with the fresh dews of night  
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright 30  
Toward heav'n's descent had sloped his westering  
wheel

Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,  
Tempered to the oaten flute  
Rough Satyrs danced and Fauns with cloven heel  
From the glad sound would not be absent long 35  
And old Damocetas loved to hear our song

But oh! the heavy change now thou art gone  
Now thou art gone and never must return!  
Thee Shepherd thee the woods and desert caves  
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown, 40  
And all their echoes, mourn  
The willows and the hazel copses green  
Shall now no more be seen  
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays  
As killing as the canker to the rose 45  
Or taint worm to the weanling herds that graze  
Or frost to flowers that their gay wardrobe wear  
When first the white-thorn blows,  
Such Lycidas thy loss to shepherd's ear

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless  
deep 50

Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?  
For neither were ye playing on the steep  
Where your old bards the famous Druids lie  
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,  
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream 55  
Ay me! I fondly dream,  
Had ye been there for what could that have  
done?

What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore  
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son  
Whom universal nature did lament 60  
When by the rout that made the hideous roar  
His gory visage down the stream was sent  
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?

Alas! what boots it with incessant care  
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade, 65  
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?  
Were it not better done, as others use  
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,  
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?  
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise 70  
(That last infirmity of noble mind)  
To scorn delights and live laborious days  
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find  
And think to burst out into sudden blaze  
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears 75  
And slits the thim-spun life But not the praise  
Phœbus replied and touched my trembling ears  
Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,

Not in the glistering foil  
 Set off to the world, nor in broad rumor lies 80  
 But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes  
 And perfect witness of all judging Jove,  
 As he pronounces lastly on each deed  
 Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed  
 O fountain Arethuse and thou honored flood, 85  
 Smooth sliding Mincius crowned with vocal reeds  
 That strain I heard was of a higher mood  
 But now my oar proceeds,  
 And listens to the Herald of the Sea  
 That came in Neptune's plea 90  
 He asked the waves and asked the felon winds  
 What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?  
 And questioned every gust of rugged wings  
 That blows from off each beaked promontory,  
 They knew not of his story, 95  
 And sage Hippotades their answer brings  
 That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed  
 The air was calm and on the level brine  
 Sleek Panope with all her sisters played  
 It was that fatal and perfidious bark, 100  
 Built in the eclipse and rigged with curses dark  
 That sunk so low that sacred head of thine  
 Next, Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow  
 His mantle hairy and his bonnet sedge  
 Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge 105  
 Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe  
 Ah! who hath reft, quoth he, my dearest pledge?  
 Last came, and last did go,  
 The Pilot of the Galilean Lake,  
 Two massy keys he bore of metals twain 110  
 (The golden opes the iron shuts amain)  
 He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake —  
 How well could I have spared for thee young  
 swain,  
 Enow of such as for their bellies sake  
 Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold! 115  
 Of other care they little reckoning make  
 Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast  
 And shove away the worthy bidden guest  
 Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to  
 hold 119  
 A sheep hook or have learned ought else the least  
 That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!  
 What recks it them? What need they? They are sped  
 And when they list their lean and flashy songs  
 Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw  
 The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed 125  
 But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,  
 Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread  
 Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
 Daily devours apace and nothing said  
 But that two-handed engine at the door 130  
 Stands ready to smite once and smite no more  
 Return, Alphæus, the dread voice is past

That shrunk thy streams, return Sicilian Muse  
 And call the vales and bid them hither cast  
 Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues 135  
 Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use  
 Of shades and wanton winds and gushing brooks,  
 On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks  
 Throw hither all your quaint enameled eyes 139  
 That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers  
 And purple all the ground with vernal flowers  
 Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies  
 The tufted crow toe and pale jessamine  
 The white pink and the pansy freaked with jet  
 The glowing violet 145  
 The musk rose and the well attired woodbine  
 With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,  
 And every flower that sad embroidery wears  
 Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,  
 And daffodillies fill their cups with tears 150  
 To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies  
 For so to interpose a little ease  
 Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise  
 Ay me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas  
 Wash far away where'er thy bones are hurled 155  
 Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides  
 Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide  
 Visitst the bottom of the monstrous world  
 Or whether thou to our moist vows denied,  
 Sleepst by the fable of Bellerus' old 160  
 Where the great Vision of the guarded mount  
 Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold  
 Look homeward, Angel now and melt with ruth  
 And O ye dolphins waft the hapless youth 164  
 Weep no more woeful shepherds, weep no more,  
 For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,  
 Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor  
 So sinks the day star in the ocean bed,  
 And yet anon repairs his drooping head,  
 And tricks his beams and with new spangled ore 170  
 Flames in the forehead of the morning sky  
 So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,  
 Through the dear might of Him that walked the  
 waves,  
 Where, other groves and other streams along  
 With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves, 175  
 And hears the unexpressive nuptial song  
 In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love  
 There entertain him all the Saints above,  
 In solemn troops and sweet societies,  
 That sing, and singing in their glory move, 180  
 And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes  
 Now Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more  
 Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore  
 In thy large recompense and shalt be good  
 To all that wander in that perilous flood 185  
 Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and hills  
 While the still morn went out with sandals gray,

He touched the tender stops of various quills  
 With eager thought warbling his Doric lay  
 And now the sun had stretched out all the hills 190  
 And now was dropped into the western bay  
 At last he rose and twitched his mantle blue  
 To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new

## Milton's "Lycidas"

*Samuel Johnson*

Dr Johnson's strongest merit as a critic lay in his sturdy common sense which while it sometimes led him to understand where some of his contemporaries—perhaps more sensitive than he but less independent—failed just as often made him blind to qualities which by its very nature common sense could not appreciate. One of the most notable of his failures as a critic was in his treatment of Milton's *Lycidas*. To begin with Johnson's critical judgments were affected by his religious and political prejudices and he was not in the least sympathetic to Milton's political radicalism but much more serious was the failure of his imagination to rise to the level demanded by the poem. Within his assumptions Johnson's criticisms of the poem are consistent and sound but what is at fault is that the assumptions he made simply do not apply to the poem there is no point at which both poem and criticism meet. Yet Johnson does strike a responsive note his manly tone his contempt for obscurity his demand for plain speaking and clear ideas often occur to us when we are confronted with a particularly difficult poem. William James was but echoing Johnson when he expostulated with his brother Henry: "For God's sake Henry say it!" Johnson's failure to understand *Lycidas* should serve as a salutary lesson that common sense is not enough and that the poet cannot be made to fit into the limitations and restrictions of the critic on the contrary the critic must accommodate himself to the poet.

ONE of the poems on which much praise has been bestowed is *Lycidas* of which the diction is harsh the rhymes uncertain and the numbers displeasing. What beauty there is, we must therefore seek in the sentiments and images. It is not to be considered as the effusion of real passion for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions. Passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy nor calls upon Arethuse and Minceus, nor tells of rough *satyrs* and *fauns with cloven heel*. Where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief.

In this poem there is no nature, for there is no

truth there is no art for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral easy vulgar, and therefore disgusting whatever images it can supply are long ago exhausted and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind. When Cowley tells of Hervey that they studied together it is easy to suppose how much he must miss the companion of his labours, and the partner of his discoveries but what image of tenderness can be excited by these lines?

We drove a field and both together heard  
 What time the gray fly winds her sultry horn  
 Battering our flocks with the fresh dews of night

We know that they never drove a field, and that they had no flocks to batten, and though it be allowed that the representation may be allegorical the true meaning is so uncertain and remote, that it is never sought, because it cannot be known when it is found.

Among the flocks and copses and flowers appear the heathen deities Jove and Phœbus Neptune and Æolus with a long train of mythological imagery such as a College easily supplies. Nothing can less display knowledge or less exercise invention than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion and must now feed his flocks alone without any judge of his skill in piping, and how one god asks another god what is become of Lycidas, and how neither god can tell. He who thus grieves will excite no sympathy he who thus praises will confer no honour.

This poem has yet a grosser fault. With these trifling fictions are mingled the most awful and sacred truths, such as ought never to be polluted with such irreverend combinations. The shepherd likewise is now a feeder of sheep, and afterwards an ecclesiastical pastor, a superintendent of a Christian flock. Such equivocations are always unskilful but here they are indecent and at least approach to impiety of which however, I believe the writer not to have been conscious.

Such is the power of reputation justly acquired, that its blaze drives away the eye from nice examination. Surely no man could have fancied that he read *Lycidas* with pleasure, had he not known its author.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the reasons for Johnson's objections to the style of *Lycidas*?
- 2 Why does Johnson think that the poem is not an effusion of real passion? Do you agree with him on this?
- 3 What objection does Johnson have to Milton's use of the allegorical method to express personal grief? Is he

right? Is Milton's poem merely the expression of personal grief?

4 Is Milton impious in the poem as Johnson charges?

5 Where does Johnson go wrong in his criticism of the poem?

6 Can you give other examples of such a failure as Johnson's criticism of *Lycidas*?

## Ulysses

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

It little profits that an idle king,  
By this still hearth among these barren crags,  
Matched with an aged wife I mete and dole  
Unequal laws unto a savage race, 4  
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me  
I cannot rest from travel, I will drink  
Life to the lees All times I have enjoyed  
Greatly, have suffered greatly both with those  
That loved me and alone, on shore and when  
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades 10  
Vexed the dim sea I am become a name  
For always roaming with a hungry heart  
Much have I seen and known—cities of men  
And manners, climates, councils, governments  
Myself not least but honoured of them all—  
And drunk delight of battle with my peers, 16  
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy  
I am a part of all that I have met  
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough  
Gleams that untraveled world whose margin fades  
Forever and forever when I move 21  
How dull it is to pause to make an end  
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!  
As though to breathe were life! Life piled on life  
Were all too little, and of one to me 25  
Little remains, but every hour is saved  
From that eternal silence, something more,  
A bringer of new things, and vile it were  
For some three suns to store and hoard myself  
And this grey spirit yearning in desire  
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,  
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought  
This is my son mine own Telemachus  
To whom I leave the scepter and the isle—  
Well-loved of me discerning to fulfill  
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild  
A rugged people, and through soft degrees  
Subdue them to the useful and the good  
Most blameless is he, centered in the sphere  
Of common duties decent not to fail  
In offices of tenderness and pay  
Meet adoration to my household gods,  
When I am gone He works his work, I mine

There lies the port, the vessel puffs her sail  
There gloom the dark broad seas My mariners 45  
Souls that have toiled and wrought and thought  
with me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took  
The thunder and the sunshine and opposed  
Free hearts free foreheads—you and I are old,  
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil 50  
Death closes all but something ere the end  
Some work of noble note, may yet be done  
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods  
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks 54  
The long day wanes the slow moon climbs the deep  
Moans round with many voices Come, my friends,  
Tis not too late to seek a newer world  
Push off and sitting well in order smite  
The sounding furrows, for my purpose holds  
To sail beyond the sunset and the baths 60  
Of all the western stars until I die  
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down  
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles  
And see the great Achilles whom we knew 64  
Though much is taken much abides and though  
We are not now that strength which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven that which we are we  
are—

One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield 70

## Because I Could Not Stop for Death

EMILY DICKINSON

Because I could not stop for Death  
He kindly stopped for me,  
The carriage held but just ourselves  
And Immortality  
We slowly drove he knew no haste, 5  
And I had put away  
My labor, and my leisure too,  
For his civility  
We passed the school where children played 10  
Their lessons scarcely done,  
We passed the fields of gazing grain,  
We passed the setting sun  
We paused before a house that seemed 40  
A swelling of the ground  
The roof was scarcely visible,  
The cornice but a mound

Since then tis centuries but each  
 Feels shorter than the day  
 I first surmised the horses heads  
 Were toward eternity

20

## Emily Dickinson

*Allen Tate*

There is a romantic notion that the writer must personally experience life on all its levels if he is to write truthfully and movingly about it. This is perhaps true in the case of such poets as Byron whose life was in itself a kind of work of art and in some senses Byronism is more important than Byron or his poems. But for other poets the external facts of his biography may have no direct connection with the life of the spirit which he led and in the case of Emily Dickinson the physical events of her life seem to be quite without significance and the inner life is all. Nevertheless there is always a mystery about such poets one cannot help wondering whence came the experiences which are so intensely and truly communicated. The study of a poet's biography often leads to absurd lengths especially when we forget that what is important is the poem not the poet. Yet without the poet there can be no poems (the communal theory of the origin of the ballads has been broken down successfully) and there are some poems which demand for their proper understanding some knowledge of the pertinent facts of the poet's life. The use of biography in criticism is a delicate business for while it is questionable that *Antony and Cleopatra* would be better understood if we had more information about Shakespeare's life it is possible that some of the *Sonnets* would take on other and perhaps richer meanings if we did. Allen Tate himself a poet carefully examines the poetry of Emily Dickinson in the light of her life her times and her poetry his essay is an example of how the various methods of criticism can be successfully linked together to elucidate the meaning of a poem and to rehabilitate the reputation of a hitherto neglected poet.

### I

GR<sup>EAT</sup> poetry needs no special features of difficulty to make it mysterious. When it has them the reputation of the poet is likely to remain uncertain. This is still true of Donne and it is true of Emily Dickinson, whose verse appeared in an age unfavorable to the use of intelligence in poetry. Her poetry is not like any other poetry of her time, it is not like any of the innumerable kinds of verse written today. In still another respect it is far removed from us.

It is a poetry of ideas and it demands of the reader a point of view—not an opinion of the New Deal or of the League of Nations but an ingrained philosophy that is fundamental a settled attitude that is almost extinct in this eclectic age. Yet it is not the sort of poetry of ideas which like Pope's requires a point of view only. It requires also for the deepest understanding which must go beneath the verbal excitement of the style, a highly developed sense of the specific quality of poetry—a quality that most persons accept as the accidental feature of something else that the poet thinks he has to say. This is one reason why Miss Dickinson's poetry has not been widely read.

There is another reason and it is a part of the problem peculiar to a poetry that comes out of fundamental ideas. We lack a tradition of criticism. There were no points of critical reference passed on to us from a preceding generation. I am not upholding here the so-called dead hand of tradition but rather a rational insight into the meaning of the present in terms of some imaginable past implicit in our own lives. We need a body of ideas that can bear upon the course of the spirit and yet remain coherent as a rational instrument. We ignore the present which is momentarily translated into the past, and derive our standards from imaginative constructions of the future. The hard contingency of fact invariably breaks these standards down leaving us the intellectual chaos which is the sore distress of American criticism. Marxian criticism has become the latest disguise of this heresy.

Still another difficulty stands between us and Miss Dickinson. It is the failure of the scholars to feel more than biographical curiosity about her. We have scholarship, but that is no substitute for a critical tradition. Miss Dickinson's value to the research scholar who likes historical difficulty for its own sake is slight, she is too near to possess the remoteness of literature. Perhaps her appropriate setting would be the age of Cowley or of Donne. Yet in her own historical setting she is, nevertheless, remarkable and special.

Although the intellectual climate into which she was born in 1830, had as all times have, the features of a transition the period was also a major crisis culminating in the War between the States. After that war in New England as well as in the South spiritual crises were definitely minor until the First World War.

Yet a generation before the war of 1861-65 the transformation of New England had begun. When Samuel Slater in 1790 thwarted the British embargo on mill machinery by committing to memory the whole design of a cotton spinner and bringing it to Massachusetts he planted the seed of the Western spirit. By 1825 its growth in the East was rank.

enough to begin choking out the ideas and habits of living that New England along with Virginia had kept in unconscious allegiance to Europe. To the casual observer, perhaps, the New England character of 1830 was largely an eighteenth century character. But theocracy was on the decline, and industrialism was rising—as Emerson in an unusually lucid moment, put it: Things are in the saddle. The energy that had built the meeting house ran the factory.

Now the idea that moved the theocratic state is the most interesting historically of all American ideas. It was, of course, powerful in seventeenth century England but in America where the long arm of Laud could not reach it acquired an unchecked social and political influence. The important thing to remember about the puritan theocracy is that it permeated as it could never have done in England a whole society. It gave final definite meaning to life: the life of pious and impious, of learned and vulgar alike. It gave—and this is its significance for Emily Dickinson, and in only slightly lesser degree for Melville and Hawthorne—it gave an heroic proportion and a tragic mode to the experience of the individual. The history of the New England theocracy, from Apostle Eliot to Cotton Mather, is rich in gigantic intellects that broke down—or so it must appear to an outsider—in a kind of moral decadence and depravity. Socially we may not like the New England idea. Yet it had an immense incalculable value for literature: it dramatized the human soul.

But by 1850 the great fortunes had been made (in the rum, slave, and milling industries) and New England became a museum. The whatnots groaned under the load of knickknacks: the fine china dogs and cats, the pieces of Oriental jade, the chips off the leaning tower at Pisa. There were the rare books and the cosmopolitan learning. It was all equally displayed as the evidence of a superior culture. The Gilded Age had already begun. But culture in the true sense, was disappearing. Where the old order, formidable as it was, had held all this personal experience, this eclectic excitement, in a comprehensible whole, the new order tended to flatten it out in a common experience that was not quite in common: it exalted more and more the personal and the unique in the interior sense. Where the old-fashioned puritans got together on a rigid doctrine and could thus be individualists in manners, the nineteenth-century New Englander, lacking a genuine religious center, began to be a social conformist. The common idea of the Redemption, for example, was replaced by the conformist idea of respectability among neighbors whose spiritual disorder, not very evident at the surface, was becoming acute. A great idea was breaking up, and society was moving towards

external uniformity, which is usually the measure of the spiritual sterility inside.

At this juncture Emerson came upon the scene: the Lucifer of Concord, he had better be called hereafter, for he was the light bearer who could see nothing but light, and was fearfully blind. He looked around and saw the uniformity of life and called it the routine of tradition, the tyranny of the theological idea. The death of Priam put an end to the hope of Troy but it was a slight feat of arms for the doughty Pyrrhus. Priam was an old gentle man and almost dead. So was theocracy and Emerson killed it. In this way he accelerated a tendency that he disliked. It was a great intellectual mistake. By it Emerson unwittingly became the prophet of a piratical industrialism, a consequence of his own transcendental individualism that he could not foresee. He was hoist with his own petard.

He discredited more than any other man the puritan drama of the soul. The age that followed, from 1865 on, expired in a genteel secularism, a mildly didactic order of feeling whose ornaments were Lowell, Longfellow, and Holmes. After Emerson had done his work, says Mr. Robert Penn Warren, any tragic possibilities in that culture were dissipated. Hawthorne alone in his time kept pure in the primitive terms, the primitive vision he brings the puritan tragedy to its climax. Man, measured by a great idea outside himself, is found wanting. But for Emerson man is greater than any idea and, being himself the Over Soul, is innately perfect, there is no struggle because—I state the Emersonian doctrine, which is very slippery in its extreme terms—because there is no possibility of error. There is no drama in human character because there is no tragic fault. It is not surprising then that after Emerson New England literature tastes like a sip of cambric tea. Its center of vision has disappeared. There is Hawthorne looking back, there is Emerson looking not too clearly at anything ahead. Emily Dickinson, who has in her something of both, comes in some where between.

With the exception of Poe there is no other American poet whose work so steadily emerges, under pressure of certain disintegrating obsessions, from the framework of moral character. There is none of whom it is truer to say that the poet is the poetry. Perhaps this explains the zeal of her admirers for her biography: it explains in part at least, the gratuitous mystery that Mrs. Bianchi, a niece of the poet and her official biographer, has made of her life. The devoted controversy that Miss Josephine Pollitt and Miss Genevieve Taggard started a few years ago with their excellent books shows the extent to which the critics feel the intimate connection of her life and work. Admiration and affection



are pleased to linger over the tokens of a great life, but the solution to the Dickinson enigma is peculiarly superior to fact

The meaning of the identity—which we merely feel—of character and poetry would be exceedingly obscure, even if we could draw up a kind of Binet correlation between the two sets of facts. Miss Dickinson was a recluse but her poetry is rich with a profound and varied experience. Where did she get it? Now some of the biographers, nervous in the presence of this discrepancy, are eager to find her a love affair and I think this search is due to a modern prejudice: we believe that no virgin can know enough to write poetry. We shall never learn where she got the rich quality of her mind. The moral image that we have of Miss Dickinson stands out in every poem: it is that of a dominating spinster whose very sweetness must have been formidable. Yet her poetry constantly moves within an absolute order of truths that overwhelmed her simply because to her they were unalterably fixed. It is dangerous to assume that her life, which to the biographers means the thwarted love affairs she is supposed to have had, gave to her poetry a decisive direction. It is even more dangerous to suppose that it made her a poet.

Poets are mysterious but a poet when all is said is not much more mysterious than a banker. The critics remain spellbound by the technical license of her verse and by the puzzle of her personal life. Personality is a legitimate interest because it is an incurable interest but legitimate as a personal interest only: it will never give up the key to any one's verse. Used to that end, the interest is false. It is apparent, writes Mr. Conrad Aiken, that Miss Dickinson became a hermit by deliberate and conscious choice—a sensible remark that we cannot repeat too often. If it were necessary to explain her seclusion with disappointment in love, there would remain the discrepancy between what the seclusion produced and the seclusion looked at as a cause. The effect, which is her poetry, would imply the whole complex of anterior fact which was the social and religious structure of New England.

The problem to be kept in mind is thus the meaning of her deliberate and conscious decision to withdraw from life to her upstairs room. This simple fact is not very important. But that it must have been her sole way of acting out her part in the history of her culture, which made, with the variations of circumstance, a single demand upon all its representatives—this is of the greatest consequence. All pity for Miss Dickinson's starved life is misdirected. Her life was one of the richest and deepest ever lived on this continent.

When she went upstairs and closed the door, she

mastered life by rejecting it. Others in their way had done it before; still others did it later. If we suppose—which is to suppose the improbable—that the love affair precipitated the seclusion, it was only a pretext: she would have found another. Mastery of the world by rejecting the world was the doctrine even if it was not always the practice of Jonathan Edwards and Cotton Mather. It is the meaning of fate in Hawthorne: his people are fated to withdraw from the world and to be destroyed. And it is one of the great themes of Henry James.

There is a moral emphasis that connects Hawthorne, James, and Miss Dickinson, and I think it is instructive. Between Hawthorne and James lies an epoch: The temptation to sin, in Hawthorne, is in James transformed into the temptation not to do the decent thing. A whole world scheme, a complete cosmic background has shrunk to the dimensions of the individual conscience. This epoch between Hawthorne and James lies in Emerson. James found himself in the post-Emersonian world and he could not, without violating the detachment proper to an artist, undo Emerson's work: he had that kind of intelligence which refuses to break its head against history. There was left to him only the value, the historic role, of rejection. He could merely escape from the physical presence of that world which, for convenience, we may call Emerson's world: he could only take his Americans to Europe upon the vain quest of something that they had lost at home. His characters, fleeing the wreckage of the puritan culture, preserved only their honor. Honor became a sort of forlorn hope struggling against the forces of pure fact that had got loose in the middle of the century. Honor alone is a poor weapon against nature, being too personal, finical and proud, and James achieved a victory by refusing to engage the whole force of the enemy.

In Emily Dickinson the conflict takes place on a vaster field. The enemy to all those New Englanders was Nature, and Miss Dickinson saw into the character of this enemy more deeply than any of the others. The general symbol of Nature for her, is Death, and her weapon against Death is the entire powerful dumb-show of the puritan theology led by Redemption and Immortality. Morally speaking, the problem for James and Miss Dickinson is similar. But her advantages were greater than his. The advantages lay in the availability to her of the puritan ideas on the theological plane.

These ideas in her poetry are momentarily assailed by the disintegrating force of Nature (appearing as Death) which while constantly breaking them down, constantly redefines and strengthens them. The values are purified by the triumphant withdrawal.

The poet attains to a mastery over experience by facing its utmost implications. There is the clash of powerful opposites and in all great poetry—for Emily Dickinson is a great poet—it issues in a tension between abstraction and sensation in which the two elements may be of course, distinguished logically, but not really. We are shown our roots in Nature by examining our differences with Nature; we are renewed by Nature without being delivered into her hands. When it is possible for a poet to do this for us with the greatest imaginative comprehension, a possibility that the poet cannot himself create, we have the perfect literary situation. Only a few times in the history of English poetry has this situation come about, notably the period between about 1580 and the Restoration. There was a similar age in New England from which emerged two talents of the first order—Hawthorne and Emily Dickinson.

There is an epoch between James and Miss Dickinson. But between her and Hawthorne there exists a difference of intellectual quality. She lacks almost radically the power to seize upon and understand abstractions for their own sake; she does not separate them from the sensuous illuminations that she is so marvelously adept at. Like Donne, she *perceives abstraction* and *thinks sensation*. But Hawthorne was a master of ideas within a limited range; this narrowness confined him to his own kind of life, his own society, and out of it grew his typical forms of experience: his steady, almost obsessed vision of man; it explains his depth and intensity. Yet he is always conscious of the abstract doctrinal aspect of his mind, and when his vision of action and emotion is weak, his work becomes didactic. Now Miss Dickinson's poetry often runs into quasi-homiletic forms, but it is never didactic. Her very ignorance, her lack of formal intellectual training, preserved her from the risk that imperiled Hawthorne. She cannot reason at all. She can only *see*. It is impossible to imagine what she might have done with drama or fiction; for, not approaching the puritan temper and through it the puritan myth through human action, she is able to grasp the terms of the myth directly and by a feat that amounts almost to anthropomorphism, to give them a luminous tension, a kind of drama among themselves.

One of the perfect poems in English is *The Chariot*, and it illustrates better than anything else she wrote the special quality of her mind. I think it will illuminate the tendency of this discussion.

Because I could not stop for death  
He kindly stopped for me  
The carriage held but just ourselves  
And immortality

We slowly drove, he knew no haste  
And I had put away

My labor and my leisure too  
For his civility

We passed the school where children played  
Their lessons scarcely done  
We passed the fields of gazing grain  
We passed the setting sun

We paused before a house that seemed  
A swelling of the ground  
The roof was scarcely visible  
The cornice but a mound

Since then 'tis centuries, but each  
Feels shorter than the day  
I first surmised the horses' heads  
Were toward eternity

If the word *great* means anything in poetry, this poem is one of the greatest in the English language. The rhythm charges with movement the pattern of suspended action back of the poem. Every image is precise and moreover not merely beautiful, but fused with the central idea. Every image extends and intensifies every other. The third stanza especially shows Miss Dickinson's power to fuse into a single order of perception, a heterogeneous series: the children, the grain, and the setting sun (time) have the same degree of credibility; the first subtly preparing for the last. The sharp *gazing* before *grain* instills into nature a cold vitality of which the qualitative richness has infinite depth. The content of death in the poem eludes explicit definition. He is a gentleman taking a lady out for a drive. But note the restraint that keeps the poet from carrying this so far that it becomes ludicrous and incredible, and note the subtly interfused erotic motive, which the idea of death has presented to most romantic poets, love being a symbol interchangeable with death. The terror of death is objectified through this figure of the genteel driver, who is made ironically to serve the end of Immortality. This is the heart of the poem: she has presented a typical Christian theme in its final irresolution without making any final statements about it. There is no solution to the problem, there can be only a presentation of it in the full context of intellect and feeling. A construction of the human will, elaborated with all the abstracting powers of the mind, is put to the concrete test of experience: the idea of immortality is confronted with the fact of physical disintegration. We are not told what to think; we are told to look at the situation.

The framework of the poem is, in fact, the two abstractions: mortality and eternity, which are made to associate in equality with the images; she sees the ideas and thinks the perceptions. She did, of course, nothing of the sort, but we must use the logical distinctions, even to the extent of paradox, if we are to

form any notion of this rare quality of mind. She could not in the proper sense think at all and unless we prefer the feeble poetry of moral ideas that flourished in New England in the eighties we must conclude that her intellectual deficiency contributed at least negatively to her great distinction. Miss Dickinson is probably the only Anglo-American poet of her century whose work exhibits the perfect literary situation—in which is possible the fusion of sensibility and thought. Unlike her contemporaries she never succumbed to her ideas, to easy solutions to her private desires.

Philosophers must deal with ideas but the trouble with most nineteenth-century poets is too much philosophy; they are nearer to being philosophers than poets without being in the true sense either. Tennyson is a good example of this, so is Arnold in his weak moments. There have been poets like Milton and Donne, who were not spoiled for their true business by leaning on a rational system of ideas who understood the poetic use of ideas. Tennyson tried to mix a little Huxley and a little Broad Church without understanding either Broad Church or Huxley, the result was fatal and what is worse, it was shallow. Miss Dickinson's ideas were deeply imbedded in her character, not taken from the latest tract. A conscious cultivation of ideas in poetry is always dangerous, and even Milton escaped ruin only by having an instinct for what in the deepest sense he understood. Even at that there is a remote quality in Milton's approach to his material, in his treatment of it in the nineteenth century, in an imperfect literary situation where literature was confused with documentation he might have been a pseudo-philosopher-poet. It is difficult to conceive Emily Dickinson and John Donne succumbing to rumination about problems; they would not have written at all.

Neither the feeling nor the style of Miss Dickinson belongs to the seventeenth century, yet between her and Donne there are remarkable ties. Their religious ideas, their abstractions are momentarily toppling from the rational plane to the level of perception. The ideas in fact are no longer the impersonal religious symbols created anew in the heat of emotion, that we find in poets like Herbert and Vaughan. They have become for Donne the terms of personality; they are mingled with the miscellany of sensation. In Miss Dickinson, as in Donne, we may detect a singularly morbid concern not for religious truth, but for personal revelation. The modern word is self-exploitation. It is egoism grown irresponsible in religion and decadent in morals. In religion it is blasphemy, in society it means usually that culture is not self-contained and sufficient, that the spiritual community is breaking up. This is along with some other features that do not concern us here: the perfect literary situation.

## II

Personal revelation of the kind that Donne and Miss Dickinson strove for in the effort to understand their relation to the world is a feature of all great poetry; it is probably the hidden motive for writing. It is the effort of the individual to live apart from a cultural tradition that no longer sustains him. But this culture which I now wish to discuss a little, is indispensable; there is a great deal of shallow nonsense in modern criticism which holds that poetry—and this is a half-truth that is worse than false—is essentially revolutionary. It is only indirectly revolutionary: the intellectual and religious background of an age no longer contains the whole spirit, and the poet proceeds to examine that background in terms of immediate experience. But the background is necessary; otherwise all the arts (not only poetry) would have to rise in a vacuum. Poetry does not dispense with tradition; it probes the deficiencies of a tradition. But it must have a tradition to probe. It is too bad that Arnold did not explain his doctrine that poetry is a criticism of life from the viewpoint of its background; we should have been spared an era of academic misconception in which criticism of life meant a diluted pragmatism, the criterion of which was respectability. The poet in the true sense criticizes his tradition either as such, or indirectly by comparing it with something that is about to replace it; he does what the root meaning of the verb implies—he *discerns* its real elements and thus establishes its value by putting it to the test of experience.

What is the nature of a poet's culture? Or, to put the question properly: what is the meaning of culture for poetry? All the great poets become the material of what we popularly call culture; we study them to acquire it. It is clear that Addison was more cultivated than Shakespeare; nevertheless Shakespeare is a finer source of culture than Addison. What is the meaning of this? Plainly it is that learning has never had anything to do with culture except instrumentally: the poet must be exactly literate enough to write down fully and precisely what he has to say but no more. The source of a poet's true culture lies back of the paraphernalia of culture and not all the historical activity of an enlightened age can create it.

A culture cannot be consciously created. It is an available source of ideas that are imbedded in a complete and homogeneous society. The poet finds himself balanced upon the moment when such a world is about to fall when it threatens to run out into looser and less self-sufficient impulses. This world order is assimilated, in Miss Dickinson as medievalism was in Shakespeare, to the poetic vision; it is brought down from abstraction to personal sensibility.

In this connection it may be said that the prior conditions for great poetry given a great talent may be reduced to two: the thoroughness of the poet's discipline in an objective system of truth, and his lack of consciousness of such a discipline. For this discipline is a number of fundamental ideas the origin of which the poet does not know: they give form and stability to his fresh perceptions of the world, and he cannot shake them off. This is his culture, and like Tennyson's God it is nearer than hands and feet. With reasonable certainty we unearth the elements of Shakespeare's culture, and yet it is equally certain—so innocent was he of his own resources—that he would not know what our discussion is about. He appeared at the collapse of the medieval system as a rigid pattern of life, but that pattern remained in Shakespeare what Shelley called a fixed point of reference for his sensibility. Miss Dickinson, as we have seen, was born into the equilibrium of an old and a new order. Puritanism could not be to her what it had been to the generation of Cotton Mather—a body of absolute truths: it was an unconscious discipline tuned to the pulse of her life.

The perfect literary situation it produces, because it is rare: a special and perhaps the most distinguished kind of poet. I am not trying to invent a new critical category. Such poets are never very much alike on the surface: they show us all the varieties of poetic feeling, and like other poets they resist all classification but that of temporary convenience. But I believe, Miss Dickinson and John Donne would have this in common: their sense of the natural world is not blunted by a too rigid system of ideas; yet the ideas, the abstractions, their education or their intellectual heritage, are not so weak as to let their immersion in nature, or their purely personal quality get out of control. The two poles of the mind are not separately visible: we infer them from the lucid tension that may be most readily illustrated by polar activity. There is no thought as such at all: nor is there feeling: there is that unique focus of experience which is at once neither and both.

Like Miss Dickinson, Shakespeare is without opinions: his peculiar merit is also deeply involved in his failure to think about anything: his meaning is not in the content of his expression: it is in the tension of the dramatic relations of his characters. This kind of poetry is at the opposite of intellectualism (Miss Dickinson is obscure and difficult, but that is not intellectualism). To T. W. Higginson, the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, who tried to advise her, she wrote that she had no education. In any sense that Higginson could understand it was quite true. His kind of education was the conscious cultivation of abstractions. She did not reason about the world she saw: she merely saw it. The ideas implicit in the

world within her rose up, concentrated in her immediate perception.

That kind of world at present has for us something of the fascination of a buried city. There is none like it. When such worlds exist, when such cultures flourish, they support not only the poet but all members of society. For, from these, the poet differs only in his gift for exhibiting the structure, the internal lineaments of his culture by threatening to tear them apart: a process that concentrates the symbolic emotions of society while it seems to attack them. The poet may hate his age: he may be an outcast like Villon, but this world is always there as the background to what he has to say. It is the lens through which he brings nature to focus and control—the clarifying medium that concentrates his personal feeling. It is ready made; he cannot make it with it: his poetry has a spontaneity and a certainty of direction that without it, it would lack. No poet could have invented the ideas of *The Chariot*; only a great poet could have found their imaginative equivalents. Miss Dickinson was a deep mind writing from a deep culture, and when she came to poetry she came infallibly.

Infallibly, at her best, for no poet has ever been perfect: nor is Emily Dickinson. Her precision of statement is due to the directness with which the abstract framework of her thought acts upon its unorganized material. The two elements of her style considered as point of view, are immortality or the idea of permanence and the physical process of death or decay. Her diction has two corresponding features: words of Latin or Greek origin and, sharply opposed to these, the concrete Saxon element. It is this verbal conflict that gives to her verse its high tension: it is not a device deliberately seized upon, but a feeling for language that senses out the two fundamental components of English and their meta-physical relation: the Latin for ideas and the Saxon for perceptions—the peculiar virtue of English as a poetic language.

Like most poets, Miss Dickinson often writes out of habit, the style that emerged from some deep exploration of an idea is carried on as verbal habit when she has nothing to say. She indulges herself

There's something quieter than sleep  
Within this inner room!  
It wears a sprig upon its breast  
And will not tell its name

Some touch it and some kiss it,  
Some chafe its idle hand  
It has a simple gravity  
I do not understand!

While simple hearted neighbors  
Chat of the early dead

We prone to periphrasis  
Remark that birds have fled!

It is only a pert remark, at best a superior kind of punning—one of the worst specimens of her occasional interest in herself. But she never had the slightest interest in the public. Were four poems or five published in her lifetime? She never felt the temptation to round off a poem for public exhibition. Higginson's kindly offer to make her verse correct was an invitation to throw her work into the public ring—the ring of Lowell and Longfellow. He could not see that he was tampering with one of the rarest literary integrities of all time. Here was a poet who had no use for the supports of authorship—flattery and fame, she never needed money.

She had all the elements of a culture that has broken up, a culture that on the religious side takes its place in the museum of spiritual antiquities. Puritanism, as a unified version of the world is dead, only a remnant of it in trade may be said to survive. In the history of puritanism she comes between Hawthorne and Emerson. She has Hawthorne's matter, which a too irresponsible personality tends to dilute into a form like Emerson's; she is often betrayed by words. But she is not the poet of personal sentiment; she has more to say than she can put down in any one poem. Like Hardy and Whitman, she must be read entire, like Shakespeare, she never gives up her meaning in a single line.

She is therefore a perfect subject for the kind of criticism which is chiefly concerned with general ideas. She exhibits one of the permanent relations between personality and objective truth, and she deserves the special attention of our time, which lacks that kind of truth.

She has Hawthorne's intellectual toughness, a hard definite sense of the physical world. The highest flights to God, the most extravagant metaphors of the strange and the remote, come back to a point of casuistry, to a moral dilemma of the experienced world. There is, in spite of the homiletic vein of utterance, no abstract speculation, nor is there a message to society; she speaks wholly to the individual experience. She offers to the unimaginative not riot of vicarious sensation; she has no useful maxims for men of action. Up to this point her resemblance to Emerson is slight; poetry is a sufficient form of utterance, and her devotion to it is pure. But in Emily Dickinson the puritan world is no longer self-contained, it is no longer complete; her sensibility exceeds its dimensions. She has trimmed down its supernatural proportions; it has become a morality, instead of the tragedy of the spirit there is a commentary upon it. Her poetry is a magnificent personal confession, blasphemous and, in its self-revelation, its honesty, almost obscene. It comes out of an

intellectual life towards which it feels no moral responsibility. Cotton Mather would have burnt her for a witch.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 What does Tate mean by saying that Emily Dickinson's poetry requires a point of view for its understanding? Is this not true of all criticism?
- 2 What does he mean by the sense of the specific quality of poetry?
- 3 What does the historical information which Tate gives us contribute to our understanding of the poems?
- 4 What does he mean by the New England idea? Do you agree with his treatment of it?
- 5 Do you agree with Tate's condemnation of Emerson?
- 6 What does he mean by saying that Emily Dickinson mastered life by rejecting it? Is this a satisfactory criterion of judgment?
- 7 Does Tate's description of the particular quality of Miss Dickinson's poetry in the paragraph beginning "These ideas in her poetry" serve to distinguish her clearly from other poets?
- 8 What does he mean by perceiving abstraction and thinking sensation? Do not other poets besides Dickinson do this?
- 9 What does he mean by the perfect literary situation? Cannot poetry be written under other circumstances than he describes?
- 10 What would Arnold have said in reply to Tate's statement that poetry is not essentially revolutionary? What would Eliot's attitude be?
- 11 Compare the use of the word *culture* in Arnold, Eliot and Tate. Which seems to you to express the superior point of view?
- 12 Have Tate's remarks on Dickinson helped you to understand and appreciate her poetry?

## Sonnet

A J M SMITH

How all men wrongly death to dignify  
Conspire, I tell Parson, poetaster, pimp,  
Each acts or acquiesces. They prettify  
Dress up, deodorise, embellish, primp  
And make a show of Nothing. Ah, but met<sup>5</sup>  
aphysics laughs: she touches, tastes and smells  
—Hence knows—the diamond holes that make a net  
Silence resettled testifies to bells  
Nothing depends on Thing which is or was  
So death makes life or makes life's worth a worth<sup>10</sup>  
Beyond all highfalutin woes or shows  
To publish and confess. Cry at the birth,  
Rejoice at the death, old Jelly Roll said,  
Being on whiskey, ragtime, chicken, and the scrip  
tures fed

# The Hollow Men

THOMAS STEARNS ELIOT

MISTAH KURTZ—HE DEAD

*A penny for the Old Guy*

## I

We are the hollow men  
We are the stuffed men  
Leaning together  
Headpiece filled with straw Alas!  
Our dried voices when  
We whisper together  
Are quiet and meaningless  
As wind in dry grass  
Or rats feet over broken glass  
In our dry cellar

Shape without form shade without colour,  
Paralyzed force gesture without motion

Those who have crossed  
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom  
Remember us—if at all—not as lost  
Violent souls, but only  
As the hollow men  
The stuffed men

## II

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams  
In death's dream kingdom  
These do not appear  
There the eyes are  
Sunlight on a broken column  
There is a tree swinging  
And voices are  
In the wind's singing  
More distant and more solemn  
Than a fading star

Let me be no nearer  
In death's dream kingdom  
Let me also wear  
Such deliberate disguises  
Rat's coat crowskin crossed staves  
In a field  
Behaving as the wind behaves  
No nearer—

Not that final meeting  
In the twilight kingdom

## III

This is the dead land  
This is cactus land  
Here the stone images  
Are raised, here they receive

The supplication of a dead man's hand  
Under the twinkle of a fading star

Is it like this 45  
In death's other kingdom  
Waking alone  
At the hour when we are  
Trembling with tenderness  
Lips that would kiss 50  
Form prayers to broken stone

## IV

5 The eyes are not here  
There are no eyes here  
In this valley of dying stars  
In this hollow valley 55  
This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms  
10 In this last of meeting places  
We grope together  
And avoid speech  
Gathered on this beach of the tumid river 60  
Sightless unless  
15 The eyes reappear  
As the perpetual star  
Multifoliate rose  
Of death's twilight kingdom 65  
The hope only  
Of empty men

## V

20 *Here we go round the prickly pear  
Prickly pear prickly pear  
Here we go round the prickly pear 70  
At five o'clock in the morning*  
25 Between the idea  
And the reality  
Between the motion  
And the act 75  
Falls the Shadow  
30 *For Thine is the Kingdom*  
Between the conception  
And the creation  
Between the emotion 80  
And the response  
35 Falls the Shadow

*Life is very long*

Between the desire  
And the spasm 85  
Between the potency  
And the existence  
Between the essence  
And the descent  
40 Falls the Shadow 90

*For Thine is the Kingdom*

For Thine is  
Life is  
For Thine is the

*This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
Not with a bang but a whimper*

## Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night

DYLAN THOMAS

Do not go gentle into that good night  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light

95

Though wise men at their end know dark is night  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night

Good men the last wave by crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight 10  
And learn, too late they grieved it on its way  
Do not go gentle into that good night

Grave men, near death who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light 15

And you, my father there on the sad height  
Curse, bless me now with your fierce tears, I pray  
Do not go gentle into that good night  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light







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